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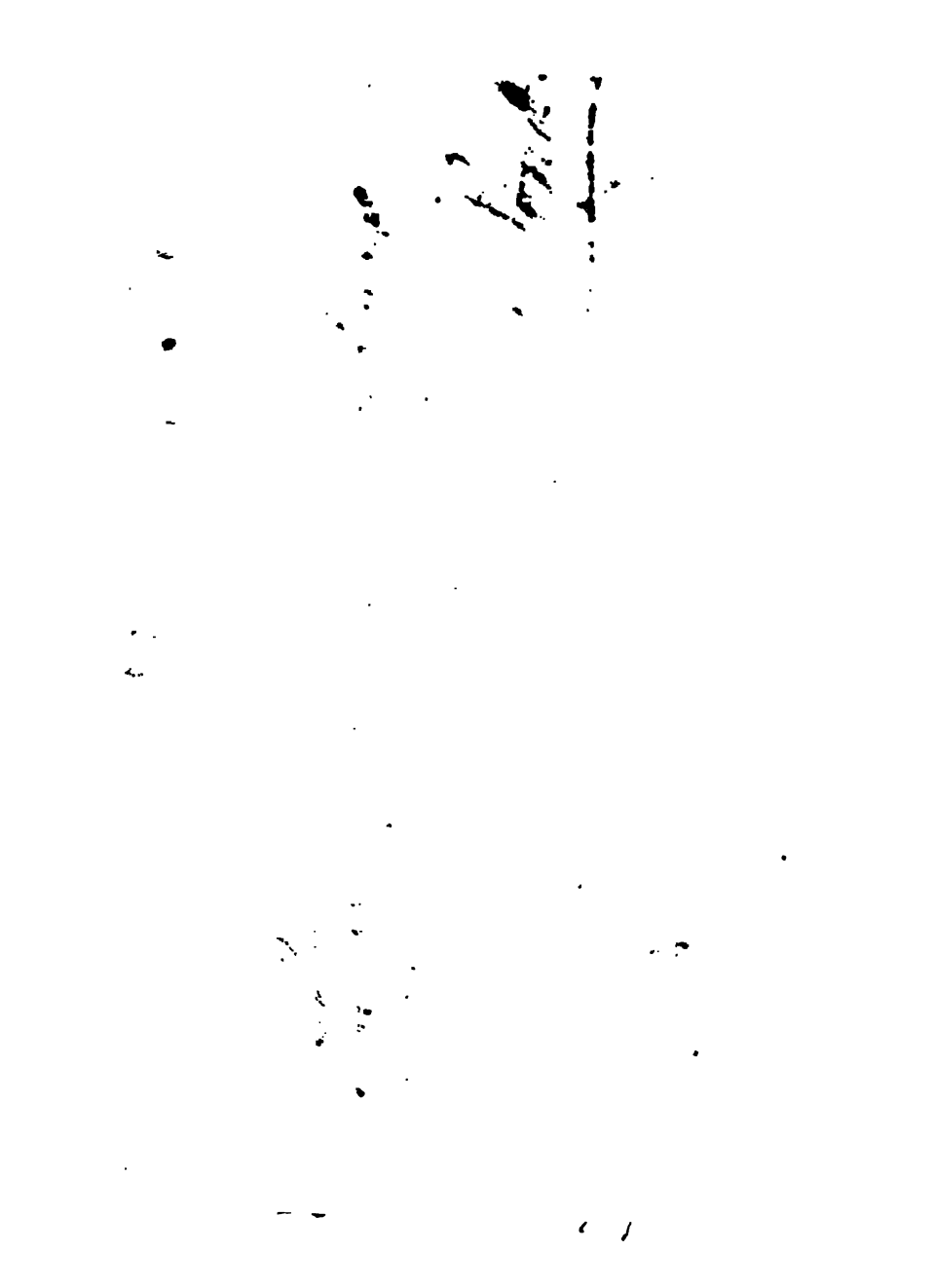

THE DISCOVERY.

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THE MINE;

OR,

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

BY

A. L. O. E.

AUTHOR OF "FAIRY KNOW-A-BIT," "THE YOUNG PILGRIM," ETC. ETC.

Though difficult and dark the way,
Faith and religion lend their ray
To guide his footsteps sure!

LINES BY H. C. TUCKER.

LONDON:
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THE MINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE.

"ELL, all that I can say," exclaimed Arthur, passionately, "is, that I wish that I had never seen this place. I wish with all my heart that I had never left school!"

"What! not even for the holidays?" said Phemie.

"Holidays!" repeated the boy, in a tone of bitter irony, pausing a moment in his occupation of shaping a fragment of wood, with a very blunt knife, into a form meant to represent that of a boat; "you might as well talk of holidays in a jail, with barred windows and bolted doors, and hard labour, and bread and water!" and his knife went to work more vigorously than before.

Phemie raised her quiet eyes from her work, and glanced at the house, which threw its shadow over the spot where she and her brother were seated, on a heap of shingle. A dull old house it was, standing alone by the sea-shore, a landmark to vessels as they passed at a distance; for rarely did a boat land in the lonely little bay, on the beach of which stood Moorcroft Hatch. Though an old house, it possessed none of the picturesque beauty which we usually associate with ideas of antiquity. The Hatch boasted no pointed gable-ends, mullioned windows overhung with rich drapery of evergreens, twisted chimneys, low-arched doors, nor the stone porch which, with its wooden seat, offers shelter and rest to the wayfarer. It was a tall, unsightly building, with small square old-fashioned windows, and red-tiled roof, from which the blackened chimneys stood straight up like sentinels, defying the wind, which howled and shrieked among them. The place wore an aspect of dreariness and neglect. Some of the mortar had fallen from the bricks; the paint on the wood-work was blistered and peeled; the creeper, which had once mantled the side of the house, stretched dead, leafless branches, the skeleton of itself, still fastened by rusty nails to the wall. Dust lay thick on the small panes of the windows, serving to conceal the absence of the clean white curtains which give to English homes an air

of cleanliness and comfort. There was little of vegetation seen around. What might have been intended for a garden, displayed scarcely anything but a jungle of tamarisk. Stones and sand encumbered the soil; except in one corner, which Phemie had cleared for herself, where the pebbles, laid in neat but formal order, served as a border to a small, tidy parterre. Hardly a vestige of green appeared for the eye to look upon, except on the old worn door-step which wore the hue suggestive of damp, while a few stray blades of grass, perversely enough, raised their sickly stems beside it, to bear witness that few were the steps which ever crossed the threshold now. A very dull old house it looked, as it stood turning its back to the warm setting sun, setting its face towards the east wind, and staring straight upon the sea, like a surly spirit, resolved to be daunted by nothing, but to make the worst of everything.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Arthur, as his sister's eyes were again lowered to her work. "You who seem born to be always contented—quite happy to be shut up like an oyster in a shell—what can even you say to such a house?"

"That it would look better if it were cleaner," replied Phemie, laying down her hem with minute exactness.

"I defy any one to make it look well, under any circumstances!" exclaimed Arthur. "It is the ugliest house, in the ugliest position, in the ugliest spot upon the face of creation! There is not an object here to look upon that is not ugly!"

"The sea," quietly suggested Phemie.

"The sea does not look here as it does anywhere else! You never have a proper good storm in this miserable bay! I like to see the great billows come rolling and tossing upon the shore, covering the beach with their creamy foam, and tossing on high their sparkling spray! But here, even when I can see the distant waters all whitened with the gale, the waves come creeping in as if they were ashamed of themselves, and had not life or spirit for a toss! The very sea-mews never come near us here; not a swallow builds its nest under our eaves; one never hears the voice of a bird!"

"You forget the owl."

"The owl! yes," said Arthur, contemptuously; "I just wish I could get a good fling at the fellow, I'd stop his hateful scream, that I would! One hears the owl, and sees the bats—they are the only creatures likely to stay in such a place, except the mice and the rats behind the wainscot!"

"But I daresay that the house looked very dif-

ferent in old times, when grandmamma was living, and poor papa and uncle were boys."

"I don't believe that Uncle Horace ever was a boy!" said Arthur, quickly. "You need not laugh, Phemie; I mean he never was like other boys. He was like the statue of a boy, as he is like the statue of a man: there was never any fun or spirit in him."

"Oh, but Mrs. Vesey says that he was a very lively boy."

"I would not believe it if a thousand Mrs. Veseys said it!" exclaimed Arthur. "I am positive that Uncle Horace never played at leap-frog, nor kicked a ball, nor handled a bat in his life!"

"He has a bat in his hand in his picture," remarked Phemie; "and papa is standing beside him with a book; and uncle looks the merrier of the two."

"Where is there such a picture?" asked Arthur, eagerly; "I never saw one in the house."

"It is in Mrs. Vesey's little room. She says that it used to be hung up in the dining-room, over the fireplace."

"And why is it not there now?" exclaimed the boy.

"I believe," said Phemie, lowering her voice, "uncle could not bear the sight of it, it so reminded

him of poor dear papa. Mrs. Vesey says it made him gloomy."

"He could not be gloomier than he is," observed Arthur; "I don't think he knows how to smile."

"That is because he feels papa's death so much," said Phemie, gently. "And it was so sad, just as they were coming home from India, after so many years' absence, and travelling together so happily; it was so very sad for his only brother to suddenly die on the way."

"I have heard that he was very fond of my father," said Arthur, more quietly; "though I can scarcely fancy Uncle Horace fond of any one or any thing."

"He is kind to me—to both of us; it is kind in him to give us a home," observed Phemie, with a gentle sigh.

"I don't call it kindness," said Arthur impatiently. "He treats us like pieces of clock-work—winds us up regularly enough, expects us to stand quietly in our places, and tick, tick away at our tiresome round of duties; and he never thinks that we can want any change, or any fun, or anything to keep us from growing as rusty as that old knocker which I am always longing to twist off and shy into the sea."

"He takes a great deal of trouble with your studies."

"I wish he would leave me alone," cried Arthur, plying his knife with such energy that the blade suddenly snapped in the middle. He flung it from him passionately, and the half-finished boat after it.

"What a pity!" said Phemie.

"Well," exclaimed Arthur, springing to his feet, "I'd rather break like the knife than rust like the knocker. I tell you what, Phemie—I have borne this kind of life for six months, but I won't bear it much longer."

"I don't see how you can help yourself," observed Phemie, folding up her work; for the sun had gone down, and twilight was closing around.

"Phemie, nothing provokes me like your quiet matter-of-fact way. You look as if nothing would ever put you out. You look as old-fashioned and sober as the house itself; and as long as you are left to read, read, and stitch, stitch, from morning till night, you would not care if you never saw a being but the stiff house-keeper, Mrs. Vesey."

"Oh, Arthur!"—there was a little reproach in the tone, and in the touch of the small hand which was laid on his arm.

"Ah! well, I daresay that you have no objection to have me too, though I should tire out any patience but yours with my grumbling. But you are patience itself, little puss, and a model sister, as sisters go;

but, you see, I want the company of boys like myself. I want boating, and fishing, and cricket; I can't sit moping as you do! A place like this suits an owl or a bat very well, but it won't do at all for an eagle!"

"I wish that you had a better companion," said Phemie, rather sadly; then added more cheerfully, "Are there no neighbours within reach, Arthur? You walk much further than I ever do; have you never seen any one whom you could play with?"

"There's only one house within two miles of us," said Arthur; "for, of course, I don't count the cottages at Oldshaft. You see that low clump of trees there, in the distance?"

"No, I don't see it," replied Phemie.

"Well, you would see it, if it were not growing so dark, or at least you would see it from the upper windows. There's a large house in the middle of these trees, quite hidden by them from the road. It belongs to an old Jew called Salomons; I hear that he is very rich."

"Have you ever been into the grounds?"

"Not I; but I walked right round them yesterday, just because I liked the look of trees; and it was pleasant to hear the cawing of the rooks, and the note of the thrush sounded cheerful."

"Oh, I wish that we had a thrush here!" exclaimed Phemie.

"As I skirted the high brick wall—for there's no seeing into the place—I heard something singing besides the thrush."

"A blackbird," suggested Phemie.

"Out! it was not a blackbird, or bird of any other colour; it was the voice either of a boy or a girl—I was not sure which,—very high and sweet. I could not help stopping to listen."

"What sort of a song was it, Arthur?"

"Not a regular song—a kind of wild warble, as if the singer were putting his thoughts into music just as they came into his head."

"*His* thoughts! it was a boy then?"

"If you're quiet, I'll tell you all about it. The song, or whatever you might call it, sounded very sad and melancholic; so, thinks I, there's some poor prisoner shut up in a cage, and leading as dismal a life as myself. Perhaps I may find that he'd be as glad of a companion as I should be to have one. So I waited till his ditty was done, and then I gave a little whistle."

"And then?" said Phemie, with some curiosity.

"Nothing came of that; so I determined to try music, and gave out 'The British Grenadiers,' in fine style!"

"And did any voice answer?"

"Presently there was a rustling of leaves on the other side of the wall, and then a slim, small hand appeared on the top, and next a face was seen above it."

"What sort of a face?" asked Phemie.

"Just the sort of face to match the voice. You scarcely could say if it belonged to a boy or a girl; only there was a shirt collar, and a neck-tie hanging very loose: but in long dark hair all curling over his shoulders, and large eyes just like a stag's, and such delicate brows over them, Asahel looks more like a girl."

"Asahel? how did you know that was his name?"

"He told me, to be sure; and I told him mine, and what a wretched life I led up here at the Hatch. He's as badly off as myself, I take it—living all alone with his old grandfather the Jew. He has never been at school as I have, and passes all the day moping over books."

"Might he come here, do you think?"

Arthur shook his head. "I don't fancy so," was his reply; "he seems shut up closer than I am."

"Are you going to him again?"

"I did go to-day; but I did not see him, though I walked right round the wall, and looked in at the gate, and sang all the songs that I could think of."

"And why did you not tell me all this before?"

ARTHUR RELATES HIS ADVENTURES.

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Arthur's sunburnt cheek coloured a little. "I thought that you might laugh at my romantic adventure," said he.

"I do not see that it is romantic," replied Phemie.

"That is because you have not seen my new friend. He looks like a bit of a poem himself—as if he lived in the times long ago. I can hardly fancy that he wears a jacket and trousers, or that he has ever tasted roast beef and plum-pudding."

Phemie burst into a silvery laugh, but suddenly checked herself as the door of the house unclosed, and a tall figure in black appeared at the entrance.

"Children, how come you to be out so late, against orders?" The voice was a stern one, and stern and gloomy was the aspect of him who spoke. Phemie, without uttering a word, hastened into the house; Arthur muttered something between his teeth, and followed with more slow and reluctant step. His uncle watched in silence till he had entered; then saying, gravely, "I expect punctuality in future," closed the door, and the sound echoed drearily along the empty hall and the uncarpeted passages of the gloomy old dwelling.

CHAPTER II.

THE INMATES OF THE HOUSE.

ARTHUR MOORCROFT had been a general favourite with his school-fellows. Active and strong, full of high health and exuberant spirits, he had been foremost in every scheme of amusement, and had taken the lead in every game. He had a generous heart and an open hand; and when a parcel had arrived with his name upon it, it had been a cause of not disinterested rejoicing to all who shared his room. No one could have charged him with a mean or a shabby act. He was too brave to cringe to those above him, or to bully those below. Thus Arthur had been, as I have said, a favourite with his companions; but with the masters he was occasionally in disgrace. His was a proud and wilful spirit—hating restraint, struggling against control—that republican spirit,

so common amongst boys, which allows no weight to age and experience, and regards discipline in the light of tyranny.

Arthur had nearly completed his thirteenth year, when he heard of the death of his father, whose arrival from India he had been expecting. The intelligence was not sent directly to himself, but in a brief business letter addressed to his master by his uncle, who became from thenceforth Arthur's natural guardian and protector. At a moment when the boy's hopes and expectations had been strongly excited by the prospect of a meeting with his only surviving parent, the blow had at first been keenly felt. But Arthur had no personal recollection of his father, from whom he had been parted at a very early age ; his grief, therefore, was not of long duration, and his thoughts were soon turned into another channel by the perception of the change which would be made in the course of his own life.

Mr. Horace Moorcroft's first letter had been dated from Sicily, into a port of which island the steamer in which he and his brother had been travelling had been driven by stress of weather. His next letter, still addressed, not to Arthur, but to his master, was forwarded from Southampton, and contained a brief statement of the future plans of the writer. Arthur was to quit school, and to

be educated at home. His uncle, following out a project which Arthur's father had formed before quitting India, was going to make arrangements for occupying a mansion in Cornwall, which had for more than a century belonged to the family, but which for many years had been in the hands of strangers during the absence of its proprietor in the East.

To Arthur there was something delightful in the thought of an old family mansion and an education at home. Vague ideas floated across his mind of perpetual holidays and unlimited freedom, scarcely dimmed by the possibility of the presence of a daily tutor. He knew that the house was by the sea-side, and to Arthur the word was suggestive of an endless variety of boyish pleasures. He read books of naval adventure, caught up sea phrases, speculated on the chances of having a boat of his own, and elated the spirits of more than one of his school-fellows by promises of inviting them down to spend the holidays at Moorcroft Hatch, where there should be "no end of fishing, and sailing, and all kinds of fun!" Never had time appeared to pass so wearily to the boy, as the weeks which intervened before his uncle, having settled various business in London, announced, again in a letter to the master, that his nephew might join him in Cornwall, whither Phemie

Moorcroft, who had been brought up by a distant relation, was expected in a few days to follow him.

A December sun was shining cheerfully on the day when Arthur quitted his school, as though to make up by its brilliancy for the shortness of its stay above the horizon. There were shakings of hands, waving of caps, and loud good wishes, and perhaps secret feelings of envy, as Arthur bade good-bye to the group of school-boys who clustered round the gate to see him off. There is a natural love of variety in the human breast, and especially in that of the young; and at Arthur's age hope is strong, experience has not yet nipped its blossoms—all is bright and fair to the eye. Arthur's railway-journey was a very pleasant one. Many were the airy castles which he built for himself as the train rattled on through a country whose snowy mantle glittered in the rosy rays of the sun. Arthur, in his own eyes, had suddenly acquired an accession of age and dignity. He was no longer a mere school-boy, mixing with the common herd, toiling on the beaten track, obliged to con his daily task; he was going to live at the mansion of his ancestors, where, as the probable heir, he would doubtless be a person of considerable importance. He would be looked up to by the tenants (for tenants he regarded as an indispensable adjunct to an ancient country hall);

he speculated on the probability of a Christmas dinner to them, and actually began to weigh in his mind what he should reply in case of his health being proposed. Then Arthur revolved the subject of his studies, which were necessary to be pursued, which might be set aside, and formed a plan of self-education for a youth who had attained a sensible age—such age being, of course, just thirteen —which he believed to be incomparably more calculated to form and strengthen the mind than the wretched system pursued at schools.

At length the sun went down, rosy and bright to the last; and just as the chill of a winter's evening was beginning to make itself felt, the train arrived at the station at which Arthur knew that he was to stop. He buttoned his greatcoat close up to his chin, hurriedly snatched up his carpet-bag, and, bidding good-evening to his fellow-passengers in as man-like a fashion as the eagerness of the boy would permit him to assume, Arthur sprang upon the platform. He half expected to find his uncle and a carriage and pair waiting to receive him; and was looking round eagerly to see any indications of their presence, when an omnibus-guard touched him on the shoulder, asked him if he warn't the young gemman as was expected at the Hatch, and in a few minutes Arthur was perched on the top of

the lumbering vehicle, all the inside places being full.

Arthur found his elevated position most uncomfortably cold; his hands and feet seemed congealing into ice; and never had any conveyance appeared to move at so tedious a pace. The gray cold mist hid the landscape from his view, even before the darkness of night entirely shut it out. Arthur was hungry, cold, and impatient, and thought more of dinner and fire than either of tenants or studies. A dozen times he asked the driver whether they were not near to the house; and heartily glad was he when at length the horses were pulled up at the door.

Arthur was so stiff and benumbed that he could scarcely descend from his lofty seat. It was too dark to see much of the aspect of the place; but his heart felt chilled by the sight of the closed door, and the dim light which came through two of the windows; and the very house-bell, when he pulled the rusty handle, had a harsh, unwelcoming sound. The door was opened by a servant girl, with a candle in her hand, which was immediately blown out by the blast of cold air from without. Arthur did not stay to question her, but, hurrying past her into the hall, himself opened the door which led into the room where he had seen the light; and,

with his cheeks glowing with the cold, and his eye bright with expectation, found himself in the presence of his uncle.

There are periods in life when a single word or look, like a touch to a bubble, breaks in a moment the air-blown fabric of fancy, and startles us at once into a perception of the dull, hard realities of life. Such was the experience of Arthur on his first arrival at what was from henceforth to be his home—his first introduction to the man who was to stand to him in the place of a father.

Horace Moorcroft was of commanding height, handsome in person, dignified in manner—in every movement and gesture a gentleman. But his features, though regular, were hard and stern; a settled gloom hung on the overhanging brow, which was marked with deep lines of care, and Arthur felt as though an iceberg had approached him, when his uncle, advancing towards him, grasped his hand with an iron pressure, and holding him at arm's length as he did so, fixed upon him a look which seemed to pierce him through and through. The silent scrutiny continued for some seconds, to the great discomfort of Arthur; then, dropping his nephew's hand without uttering a word, and heaving a heavy sigh, Horace turned away towards the fire, and looked into the dull red embers with an

expression of intense melancholy, such as Arthur had never before seen upon any human face.

The youth had now leisure to glance round the room. His survey only added to the sense of dreariness which was now taking possession of his heart. It was not merely that the apartment was large and ill-furnished, that marks of damp were upon the walls, that the ceiling was veined with long cracks, that the pictures looked so black in their dingy frames that he could scarcely make out what they were meant to represent; it was not merely that the scanty fire burned low, that but one candle shed its insufficient light;—it was the gloomy presence in the room, which seemed to make the shadows darker and the silence more oppressive.

Refreshments were brought in for the traveller—a plateful of cold meat and a tumbler of water. Arthur was hungry, and inclined to do full justice to any repast; but he could not eat at ease while the dark eye of his uncle rested upon him. It was a relief to the boy to plead the excuse of weariness, and retire early. His uncle made no objection; himself lighted the candle for his nephew, bade him good-night, in a deep, mournful tone, which reminded Arthur of wind in a vault, adding the words, "Prayers at eight, breakfast at half-past, studies at nine—see that you are not late."

"This old house is desperately chilly," thought Arthur, as he made his way up to his room. "One meets with a draught at every turn!"—he shaded his flickering candle with his hand. "I never knew steps creak so in all my life, and there seems no end to their number! I don't much fancy the look of this place. What a musty scent there is about it, too, as if no one had lived in it for a century! If it is not haunted, it seems as if it should be." He reached his dull attic room, and sat down on a chair — there was only one in the apartment. "Now what would not I give to have Tom Grange and Bill Wilkins beside me, with a jolly supper of oysters and porter! We should tell each other ghost stories till midnight; this is just the place where they would suit. Uncle Horace might have allowed me a fire. Ugh! there's not much temptation to sit up late now!" So Arthur speedily hastened to bed, as the only way of keeping himself warm, and dreamed that he was sentenced to be burned by a very slow fire, and that his uncle, as a familiar of the Inquisition, was superintending the execution.

Arthur awoke later than usual, rubbed his eyes, yawned, looked around him, counted the cobwebs which adorned the ceiling, wondered whether things would appear in a different aspect by daylight, rose,

dressed, and descended to the dining-room. Mrs. Vesey the housekeeper, and Martha the maid, were both in the act of quitting it. Arthur entered in his own frank, boyish manner, which he lost as soon as he confronted the chilling aspect of his uncle. Horace pointed solemnly to a black, funereal-looking clock, which formed the sole ornament of the high wooden mantelpiece.

"You are behind time," he said. "On another occasion such unpunctuality would involve the loss of your meal; as this is your first morning here, I say nothing, but this must not happen again."

Arthur flushed to the eyes, but was silent. He swallowed his breakfast with a very uncomfortable feeling. Not another word was uttered for some time; Horace was the first to break the silence.

"Have you ever thought of your future prospects?"

"Well, uncle," replied the boy, with some of his natural frankness of manner, eager to catch at anything that might give prospect of escape from the disagreeable life which he saw was before him; "I should like the sea, of all things; I am almost old enough to enter the navy. I have no wish at all to study at college."

"Our wishes and our welfare may not always run parallel," observed Horace, in his low, sepulchral tone.

"But I hate study; I don't think that I'd ever get on at the university. I wrote so to my father, when he proposed that I should prepare for it."

Horace started a little at the word "father," as though the speaker had unconsciously touched a wound, and the deep lines on his brow grew darker. "That settles the point," he murmured, rather to himself than to his listener; "what *he* proposed shall be done."

Arthur flushed again, and his heart glowed as well as his cheek, with an emotion very different from either gratitude or pleasure. "He thinks precious little of my likings!" was his mental reflection; "he treats me as if I were a stock or a stone!" He finished his breakfast hastily, and rising from the table, moved towards the door.

"Where are you going?" said Horace.

"I—well—I don't exactly know:" Arthur laid his hand upon the door-handle, eager to quit the apartment.

"It is almost nine," observed his uncle, glancing at the black monitor on the mantelpiece; "you had better bring your books."

"Am I to work the first day?" said Arthur desperately.

'I see no reason why your residence beneath this roof is to commence in idleness."

"And am I to study by myself, or—"

"You will study under me," replied his uncle.

Arthur burst from the room, his soul overflowing with bitterness, and closed the door behind him with rather more force than politeness would have sanctioned, or perhaps than he himself had intended.

"This is intolerable! I can't bear this!" he muttered, clenching his hand and grinding his teeth —it was such a relief to be able to give unnoticed even this vent to his feelings! "I can't stand that man's eye for ever upon me, his hollow voice, his cold gloomy manner! I'd rather be taught by the old doctor, the surly usher, the crack-brained Frenchman—any—all of them, than by him! Oh, that I were at school again! I won't bear it!"

But Arthur had to bear it, whether he would or not; and except in the cold hardness of the manner of Mr. Moorcroft, and the unbending strictness of his discipline, Arthur was not unfortunate in his tutor. Horace was a man of cultivated intellect and powerful mind. He was never unjust, never impatient, could scarcely even be termed harsh; yet the study hours were hateful to Arthur. He saw his uncle go through them with the gloomy resolution of one enduring a penance; the smile of approbation, the word of kind praise, were never on his lip. The spirit of the boy was oppressed in the

presence of his tutor, whom he half disliked, half feared, yet half admired.

But it was perhaps in his hours of recreation that Arthur most bitterly felt that his dwelling-place was not a home. He longed for a companion to whom to speak out his thoughts, some one who would share his amusements and sympathize with him in his pursuits. He wandered desolately through the dreary passages of the house, or by the shore of the bay, and thought of the expected arrival of his sister as an event of much more importance than he had once supposed that the coming of a little girl could have appeared to him.

Phemie arrived the day before Christmas. She and her brother had hitherto met very little, Arthur having usually passed his holidays at school. Arthur remembered Phemie but as a little rosy child, with curly golden hair and a shy smile, who had cried when he played with her roughly, and who, happy with her kitten and a whole family of dolls, had left him to amuse himself with companions more suited to his taste. When Arthur saw his sister again, on her arrival at Moorcroft Hatch, his first feeling was that of disappointment—the image retained in his memory had been more attractive than that before him. The curly locks were gone, and the hair, deepened in hue, was cropped around a pale face,

which, though pleasing in its expression, possessed not a shadow of beauty—Phemie had lately been ill, and not a trace of her roses was left. At the first glance Arthur thought that his sister was plain, but the second made him change his opinion. It required only a little more observation to discover that the brown eyes, usually fixed on the ground when not employed in reading or sewing, could express intelligence and quiet shrewdness, while occasionally there was a sweetness in their glance which would have made even plainer features attractive.

There was scarcely a year between the ages of the young Moorcrofts, but in height Phemie presented a striking contrast to her brother, who was a tall and handsome boy. Her form was almost stunted; and this, with the roundness of her face, and the soft high tones of her voice, made the difference between them appear much greater than it actually was. Arthur looked on his sister as one much beneath him, as one whom he never would have regarded as a companion, or chosen as a playmate, but for the unfortunate circumstances which had left him no choice. His manner towards her, especially at first, was rather condescending and patronizing, such as belonged to conscious superiority. Phemie was quiet and observant; her perceptions were more acute, her mind more advanced than

that of her brother—she was in reality on many points far less of a child than he. But she readily yielded to him the superiority which he claimed as a right, was content to receive his kindness on his own terms, listened patiently to his complaints, took interest in his concerns, and only now and then, by a shrewd remark or quiet smile, betrayed that she thought it possible that Arthur might be mistaken. He thought more of her opinion than he ever owned to himself; she exercised a quiet influence of which neither, perhaps, was aware; while Arthur laughed at her preciseness and old-fashioned ways, her insignificant figure, and round infantine face—sure never to call up on the latter a look approaching to anger—he would not willingly have appeared absurd in the eyes of Phemie, and the proud, impatient spirit of the boy found an unconscious check in the simple common sense of his sister.

CHAPTER III.

THE MINE AND THE SCHOOL.

"ARTHUR, I wish that you would come here and help me," called the soft, childish voice of Phemie, one morning a few days after the conversation which we related in the last chapter.

"Where are you?" replied her brother, as he descended the long creaking stairs which led from his room.

"Here—in the greenhouse; we shall have a half hour before the bell rings; I want to do something for my garden."

"Do you call this a greenhouse!" cried Arthur very contemptuously, as he stepped from the staircase window into the dull, dusty framework of what might once have deserved such a name. "Why, there's not one whole pane of glass left in it: the cobwebs don't serve well instead!"

"You must not grumble on this lovely spring morning," said Phemie, cheerfully; "if there's no glass in the greenhouse there's nothing to prevent the sweet breeze of May from blowing in."

"Greenhouse!" repeated Arthur, without replying to her observation, "when there is not a single green thing in it!—nothing but a few empty old flower-pots!" and he kicked one over with his foot.

"Oh! pray don't do that!" cried Phemie; "these pots are just what I am building my plans upon. I thought that you would kindly carry them for me into my garden. I have a little packet of flower-seeds sent me by dear cousin Miller; we will plant them, and then by the autumn we shall have sweet peas and convolvulus."

"You can never have a garden where the soil is so wretched," said Arthur; "everything would be stunted and miserable here."

"There is a great deal in making the best of it. Perhaps if you would dig a little—"

"Phemie," said Arthur, rather proudly, "when I take to digging, it shall be where I know that my labour is to some purpose, and where I shall have some better object than raising a few sickly flowers. I should like to reopen the works at Oldshaft, and do things on a grand scale, as they were done thirty years ago."

"What sort of things do you mean?" said Phemie.

"Don't you know that hill which you see yonder off to the right belongs to my uncle, as it did to my grandfather before him? Oldshaft is just on the other side."

"It looks a very bleak and barren hill," observed Phemie; "I doubt whether a sheep could make a good dinner off it. It is a great deal worse than my garden. I should not think that you would get much by digging there."

"That," said Arthur, with a look of conscious superiority, "is because you are but a girl, and look only at the outside of things. That hill," he continued in a louder tone, "may hold inexhaustible treasures—there is a tin mine in it!"

"Indeed! does uncle Horace know that?"

"All the world knows it," replied Arthur.

"Then why, if it belongs to my uncle, does he not dig out the treasures?" cried his sister.

"I don't think my uncle has the spirit for any dashing speculation, nor perhaps the capital—I suppose you don't know what that is; but it means a lot of hard cash. You see—" Arthur leaned against the window-post, and, putting his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, assumed as much as he could the air of a man of business. "You see my grandfather opened the mine, and laid out quantities of money

upon it, and was never repaid for what he spent. It was said that the vein was not worth the working. I don't believe a word of that; depend upon it, if he had persevered he'd have made his fortune at last. But as year after year went on, and the lode, as they call it, grew poorer and poorer, he lost his patience as well as his money, and then an accident happened—some gas or other took fire and there was an explosion, one poor fellow was killed, and the whole business was given up in disgust."

"It was a pity that it had not been given up before," said Phemie.

Arthur looked down upon her rather contemptuously. "I know that if I were my uncle," said he, "I would never cease working that mine till I had forced it to yield up its treasures!"

"If it has any to yield," added Phemie.

"I would not go on living in this wretched way, without carriage, horse, boat, or anything to make life tolerable. I would not content myself, like you, with the bare necessaries of life; I would make a bold dash for something better."

"And perhaps lose necessaries and all. You remember the fable of the dog and the shadow."

"You know nothing at all about these matters!" cried Arthur, impatiently; "women have naturally narrow minds, and understand nothing but their

own petty affairs! I'll have a talk with Asahel about that mine. He'll be all on the other tack," continued Arthur, his face relaxing into a smile; "his fancy will be running away with him, till he imagines Aladdin's famous garden under the hill—a mine of gold garnished with emeralds and diamonds —his mind could never stoop down to tin!"

"You and he seem to be growing great friends," observed Phemie.

"I don't know how it is, for if ever there were two fellows unlike each other they are Asahel and I. Why, you and I are not more different in our ways. You, Phemie, are a quiet, humdrum little body, picking your way along the high road of life, content to go on at your own sober pace, and taking great care that you don't soil your shoes; I am like a high-mettled steed, which is always reined in, and never suffered to dash forward; Asahel is a poet in a balloon, soaring up into the clouds, never touching the earth, lost in his own cloudy imaginings! I wonder which of us will arrive at the goal first!"

"What do you call the goal?" said Phemie, who was on her knees sorting her seeds.

"Happiness, to be sure—'our being's end and aim,' as somebody calls it. That's what everybody is searching for, I suppose, as my grandfather searched for the treasure in the mine."

"Which he never found," observed Phemie.

"Because he did not know how to look for it."

"Perhaps that may be the case with us."

"There is a great deal in a strong will and a resolute heart," replied her brother; "they overcome obstacles and burst through difficulties. I look upon all life as a sort of struggle, in which the boldest spirit wins the day!"

"It may be so," said Phemie, doubtfully; "but it does not seem to me, from the little that I have read and heard, that the boldest are always the most successful in the search after happiness. And," she added, "I did not quite fancy that—that our first business in life was to find it."

"No? well, let's hear your notion of the matter."

"I have heard that this world is not so much the place where happiness—real, perfect happiness, is to be looked for, as a school where we have many lessons to learn, to prepare us for a better life to come."

"What! you think that it is to be 'learn, learn,' all our days, do you? I like my simile of the mine better than yours of the school. There is something horrid in the idea of a life-long education!"

"Or a life-long search after something we never can find."

Arthur looked thoughtful for a moment, then

raised his eyes with a smile. "And in this your great world-school, Phemie, what particular lesson is set for us to learn?"

"Perhaps patience and submission," said his sister.

"Patience and submission!" repeated Arthur, with scorn; "that's a lesson I never shall learn! I don't want such womanish tasks; I'll have something glorious and great!"

"I don't believe that we are left to choose our own lessons," said Phemie.

"I certainly should never have chosen such a life as this, whatever lesson it might be intended to teach me! I wonder," cried Arthur, interrupting himself, and half laughing as the idea crossed his mind—"I wonder whether Uncle Horace takes your view or mine of the world! If he has been searching for happiness here, I am sure that he has been groping about without a light, half smothered by the choke-damp of the mine! If he has been at the learning business from his boyhood (and, to judge from his face, he has found it all work and no play), I wonder what particular lesson my solemn uncle has had to learn in the great school of life?"

"The knowledge of the human heart and its wickedness; the knowledge of the world and its vanity!"

Both the brother and sister started at the deep voice which uttered this unexpected reply. Arthur's back had been turned to the staircase, and Phemie, engaged with her seeds, had not noticed the approach of her uncle. He merely spoke the sentence and passed on, and the dining-room door had closed behind him before his auditors had recovered from their surprise.

"I say, Phemie!" exclaimed Arthur, drawing up his lips as though to whistle, "I had no notion that he was so near; he came upon us like a shadow!"

"He looks like one," observed Phemie, gathering up the seeds which in her start she had scattered.

"Do you think that he was angry?"

"I don't think that he is ever very angry—only unhappy, so very unhappy!"

"And he likes to make every one else so," observed Arthur.

"Hush!" cried Phemie, "there's the bell! we must go down!"

CHAPTER IV.

SOLITARY HOURS.

WE will now turn to another personage in our story, who, though repeatedly mentioned, we have not yet presented to the reader.

In a small but luxurious apartment in Eshcol Hall, where damask curtain and picture-hung wall, tables of marble and costly mosaic, vases of porcelain and curiosities from the East form a strange contrast to the old homely furniture of the Hatch, we shall discover Asahel da Costa.

The boy is stretched at his ease on a sofa of crimson velvet, the softened light, falling through the green Venetians on his small delicate features and long silky hair. A pile of books is on a table beside him, Spenser, Shakspeare, Byron, and Scott, the companions of his solitary hours. It is not upon a book, however, that the youth's dark eyes are

earnestly fixed, but upon a few pages, printed in the German character, which he has fastened together by a silken thread, but which, torn, soiled, and stained as they are, appear out of keeping with everything else near him.

"It is almost two o'clock," said Asahel, glancing at his watch; "Arthur will be at the gate, and I must not fail him. I wonder if he could throw light upon this? I shall ask him some day, but not yet." He carefully folded up the soiled leaves, placed them in his tortoise-shell desk, and rising slowly from his recumbent position, proceeded with a leisurely step down the flight of marble steps which led into the garden, and through it into the shrubbery and park which environed Eshcol Hall.

Arthur had described Asahel well when he said that he was "like a bit of a poem." The youth had never mingled with the world; his delicate health and the prejudices of his race had excluded him almost as entirely from it as if he had been a princess in an Eastern zenana. His mother had possessed the same poetical cast of mind as himself, and had been his companion as well as instructress; but after she had been laid in the tomb, beside three children who had preceded her to it, Asahel had had no kindred spirit with whom to interchange thoughts, and had been thrown entirely upon his own resources.

Asahel's companions were his books; he dwelt on them, thought over them, lived upon them, till the past became to him like the present, and heroes of old were as living friends. Asahel especially delighted to meditate upon gallant deeds, and instances of brave self-devotion; the sublime and beautiful had for the lonely orphan a peculiar attraction. He would lie with closed eyes on some mossy bank, where the only sound was the thrush's mellow song, or the sigh of the breeze through the branches above him, picturing scenes of which he had read, till he could almost behold the actors before him, or imagine himself in their place. Marcus Curtius on his white steed, waving a farewell to the shuddering beholders before he plunged into the yawning gulf; Pythias calmly facing death for his friend; Leonidas listening to the shout with which his devoted bands received his last words on Thermopylæ;—such were the images which the Jewish boy delighted to picture to himself. But some of the tenderest feelings of his heart were associated with the sacred land which, though he never had seen it, he yet ever regarded as his own. He thought of the venerable Abraham at the door of his tent, receiving his angel guests; of Isaac meditating in the fields when the sun was sinking in the golden west; of the gallant Maccabees defending the land of their fathers from the

heathen foe. But most Asahel loved to muse on the fair shepherd, poet, warrior, and king, whose history is as full of touching interest to the heart as it is of food for the imagination. Asahel often in thought beheld the youthful son of Jesse, as, risking his life for his sheep, he engaged in deadly struggle with the lion and the bear: or coming with the flush of triumph on his fair cheek, and the giant's head in his hand, from his glorious fight with Goliath. Or he saw David, worn with sorrow and privation, in the gloomy cave in Engedi, bending over the sleeping king who had so ruthlessly sought his life, and who now lay at the mercy of one who had been so deeply, so wantonly injured. But Asahel's favourite scene from the history of David was the fugitive's last meeting in the forest with Jonathan, the noble prince, the gallant warrior, the generous, self-devoted friend. Nothing, in all the pages of fiction that Asahel had perused, offered to his mind anything that could be compared in interest to this. David's comforter in the hour of his distress, coming from the very camp of his enemy, the very side of his persecutor; the prince's generous affection for the shepherd, for the object of his father's hatred, for one who was to wear the crown to which Jonathan might naturally have deemed himself the heir, struck a deep chord in the heart of Asahel,

and he pondered with admiration over the inspired record of a friendship so disinterested and so touching!

Asahel, in truth, had formed very high and romantic ideas of friendship, and was ready to pour the long treasured-up affections of his heart upon some living object. He had almost idolized his mother, and her death had left a weary blank, which nothing had as yet filled up. Asahel's grandfather, a dry, calculating man of business, though always kind and indulgent to the boy, was not one to draw upon himself the deep love of a heart like Asahel's. It would have been like twining a rich passion-flower round the funnel of a manufactory. Mr. Salomons was too much of the earth, earthy, to have many feelings in common with his grandson. It is possible that had Asahel lived at Moorcroft Hatch, he would have attached himself to Horace. The calm dignity of Arthur's uncle, his talents, his carelessness of worldly schemes, his neglect of personal comfort, even his silence and melancholy, instead of repelling the thoughtful boy, might rather have served to interest and attract him. Asahel would have felt sympathy for his loneliness and sadness—something of the feeling with which an imaginative mind contemplates a solitary ruin; he would have divined some cause for Horace's unchanging gloom

—some blighted hope or secret sorrow—and mingled admiration and pity might have formed an affection which would not have been unreturned. But where Asahel would have found a subject for romance, poor Arthur had only discovered cause for irritation.

And now, thrown together by circumstances, Arthur and Asahel found in each other the companion which was so necessary to the happiness of both. Not that they were congenial spirits, but it is possible that they suited each other better than if they had been more so. The frank, fearless bearing of Arthur, the merry glance of his clear blue eye, even his acquaintance with boyish sports and pursuits, from which his companion had been entirely shut out, combined to give him influence with Asahel, whose fancy readily invested him with the high and noble qualities which belonged to one of his own heroes. And to the English boy there was a strange charm in the society of one who seemed to belong to another country and another age; while his vanity was flattered by the confiding, admiring affection shown him by a companion not only older, but of intellect far superior to his own. Arthur liked to be appealed to as an authority, even on the most trifling subjects, and his pride, fretted and galled by his uncle's reserve, found solace in the partial friendship of his Jewish companion.

Arthur, as usual, was first at the place of meeting. Asahel, partly from constitutional delicacy, was more indolent in body, though more active in mind. The boys grasped each other's hands through the iron bars of the gate, and before they had been five minutes together Arthur had told his companion all about the tin mine.

"Oh! how I should like to go down into a mine!" exclaimed Asahel; "to wander through cave after cave, hung with stalactites, glittering with a thousand colours in the torch light, to look up on the roof crusted over with flashing crystals—"

"And find the tin," added Arthur.

Asahel gave his own soft, peculiar smile. "I am afraid that I should make a poor miner," said he, "unless the search were for the philosopher's stone," he added, more gaily,—"for that which would turn all base metals into gold! I have sometimes thought that if I had lived in the olden times, I should have taken to the study of alchymy, and spent my days and nights over a crucible to discover the wonderful secret."

Arthur knew little about alchymy, and did not understand the words of his companion. Unwilling, however, to show his ignorance, he said, "And if you had found it, you would have been quite happy."

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"I do not know about that," replied Asahel, plucking a blossom, and scattering its rosy petals on the ground; "it is said that the secret of happiness is harder to find out than that of the philosopher's stone. Have you discovered it yet?" he continued, raising his eyes to Arthur's.

"Well—no, not exactly, not yet," answered the boy; "there's certainly not a chance of finding it at the Hatch, and no one dreams of looking for it at school."

"I never was at school," replied Asahel.

"Who taught you your lessons then?" asked Arthur.

A very sad expression passed over the face of the Jewish youth as he replied, "I used to learn them with my mother. I did know what happiness was then," he continued, speaking slowly, as if to himself, and fixing his dark eyes on the earth; "but it was a happiness that would not last. I believe that the real treasure of life is a parent's love. I had it—I lost it—I never shall find it again."

Arthur might have whispered to his companion that the treasure was not lost for ever, that a parent's love might yet be his—one deeper, holier than even that of a mother, and which never would pass away; but the boy's mind seldom dwelt on such themes, and finding the grave tone of the con-

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versation irksome to him, he suddenly broke it off. "Well, Asahel," he cried, "I am off to Oldshaft. I want to look at the entrance to the mine, see what the place is like, and lay my plans for the future."

"How I wish I could go with you!" exclaimed Asahel.

"There's no reason why you should not. I could climb over that gate any day, and you look light enough to clamber like a cat. I can't think what keeps you in!"

"The fifth commandment," replied Asahel; then added hastily, "I forgot that you were a Christian. Perhaps you have never heard of it."

"Never heard of the fifth commandment!" exclaimed Arthur, indignantly; "it belongs to Christians just as much as to Jews!"

"We will not quarrel about it," said Asahel, quietly; "let both have it, and let both keep it too. My grandfather has forbidden me to quit the grounds."

Arthur muttered something about liberty and leading-strings, which he perhaps did not intend his companion to hear.

"But," continued Asahel, "my grandfather may relax his rules when he hears that I have a companion. He happens to be at the Hall to-day.

Would you dislike waiting a few moments? I will go and return like the lightning."

Asahel was not very long on his errand, though the time appeared tedious to the expecting Arthur. He returned with his grandfather's permission, not very graciously accorded, that he might accompany Arthur in his walks, provided that the period of his absence from home should never exceed an hour. The iron gate creaked on its hinges, the young prisoner sprang joyfully forth, and with a delicious sensation of freedom, enjoyment, and hope, the two boys made their way across the bare desolate tract which lay between Eshcol and Oldshaft, to commence at once, as Arthur laughingly said, their search after happiness and the treasures of the mine.

CHAPTER V.

THE OLD SHAFT.

IT was a bright, sunny afternoon in May, and though the country travelled by Asahel and Arthur was remarkably deficient in beauty, every tuft of golden furze, every wild blossom in the way, every variety of green flowering grass, had a charm for the eye of Asahel, who stooped down ever and anon to gather some floral gem which Arthur would have regarded as nothing but a weed.

"Have you no garden at home?" inquired he, glancing with little admiration at the wild nosegay of Asahel, and impatient of any delay.

"Oh, yes, and an abundance of beautiful flowers. They are far more splendid than these; but they do not speak so much to the heart as these little wild beauties of Nature, which spring in the path of all, which are as free to the poor as to the rich, which

make the desolate heath look gay!" And Asahel began singing, in a clear and joyous tone,

"Bring me wild-flowers, happy young flowers," &c.

"You seem very fond of music and poetry," observed Arthur.

"They are my delight," replied Asahel. "Music, indeed, I cannot fully enjoy, for I seldom hear a voice but my own; but poetry—oh! that is the very sunshine of my solitude; for I can always converse with the greatest geniuses, be allowed to share their most beautiful thoughts, and forget myself in admiring them, till I seem in another and a brighter world!"

"I like music well enough," said Arthur; "military music at least. As for poetry, I care very little for that, except some of Sir Walter Scott's, which is spirited and dashing. I like 'Hohenlinden,' too, and the 'Battle of the Baltic,' and 'Ye Mariners of England.' Are these also favourites of yours?"

"I admire them," replied Asahel, "but some other poetry much more. They are very spirit-stirring, it is true; but they do not sink down into my heart, nor leave any very deep impression."

"I never find any poetry make much impression on me," said Arthur, smiling; "but I should like to know what you think so beautiful."

"I do not think that there is anything to compare with our Hebrew poetry," said Asahel.

"Hebrew poetry! I did not know that such a thing existed! I could not understand one syllable of that."

"I do not know Hebrew myself," said Asahel; "I only read the poetry in a translation."

"And you think it finer than any English verse? I suppose that it is very, very old."

"Wondrously old," replied Asahel; "some of it was written not far from three thousand years ago."

"Now, that's very curious," said Arthur, slackening his pace; "I do believe that is older than Homer. How strange that such very ancient poems should have been preserved all this time, and that they should be finer than anything which is written now, though the age is so enlightened, as they call it. If you can remember any of this wonderfully ancient poetry, just let me hear it as we walk on our way."

Asahel's face wore a reverent expression, and he instinctively folded his hands as he commenced reciting a beautiful passage from Isaiah.

"Why!" exclaimed Arthur in surprise, as his companion stopped after repeating a few verses, "that is what is read to us in church!"

"Are our Scriptures read in your churches?" inquired Asahel with interest.

"Did you not know that you were repeating out of our Bible?" said Arthur. "I had not an idea what you meant when you spoke to me of Hebrew poetry!"

They walked on for some minutes in silence, Arthur wondering to himself how a Jew, whom he had thought altogether destitute of religion, should quote to him from the Bible; while the mind of Asahel was occupied, as it had often been before, with strange and perplexing thoughts. Arthur was the only being called by the name of Christian with whom he had ever been on intimate terms, and he felt an intense desire to know from him more of his faith—a desire which might have had its rise in simple curiosity, but owed its strength to a far nobler motive.

Asahel was the first to resume the conversation; his tone was timid and hesitating, as if he felt himself venturing on forbidden ground.

"And of whom do you—do the Christians believe that the prophet spoke when he described one who should feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs in his bosom?"

"Of our Saviour," replied Arthur, gravely.

"Your Saviour—not mine," said Asahel, and *again* relapsed into silence.

Arthur was not by any means inclined to resume the subject. He had never been accustomed to think deeply, and least of all on religion. He considered himself a Christian, as a matter of course, because he belonged to a Christian nation; he was ready to despise those who professed another faith, unless, as in the case of Asahel, they possessed qualities to win his regard; he would have been ready to strike to the earth any Mohammedan or Jew who should have uttered a word against his creed; but that creed he had never examined, never understood —I had almost said never cared for. Arthur was not one to attempt, in the slightest degree, to influence the religious belief of another.

The youths had now arrived at Oldshaft, a poor collection of cottages, scarcely deserving the name of a hamlet, nestling under the shelter of the bare bleak hill. Arthur and his comrade looked eagerly around them for any indication of a mine. Asahel's mind had pictured some yawning gulf, like that in the Forum at Rome, whose dark, gloomy depths might appear a fitting scene for the sad catastrophe which had occurred there. Arthur, who had visited Oldshaft before, was less romantic in his expectations; he rather looked for some iron door in the side of the hill, placed there to prevent strangers from prosecuting the search for the mineral treasures

within. But neither yawning chasm nor iron door was to be seen; and Asahel, drawing out his jewelled watch, reminded Arthur that they could make no very long stay.

"But I must know something more of the mine!" exclaimed Arthur; "here is a man who will give us information." And followed by Asahel he hastened towards a gray-headed old peasant, who was employed in piling brushwood at the back of a shed built of shingle.

"I say, good friend," began Arthur, taking upon himself the office of spokesman, "how far is it to the entrance of the mine?"

The peasant stopped in his occupation, stared at the strangers, and put his hand to his ear.

"Is the place of the shaft near this spot?" cried Asahel, raising his musical voice.

"Ay," replied the old man; "this here place is called Oldshaft by all the country round."

"He is as deaf as a post!" exclaimed Arthur, impatiently; and going closer to the peasant he hollooed in unmistakable tones, while Asahel pointed significantly to the ground, "Where is the entrance to the tin mine—the shaft by which men used to get down to work it?"

"Oh, ay!" cried the old man, a gleam of intelligence dawning on his rough, weather-beaten face,

"that's what you bees arter, is it? The old shaft was sunken just yonder."

Arthur and Asahel turned their eyes eagerly in the direction indicated, where an overgrown pig was rummaging amongst rubbish for some bits of stale cabbage, and peelings of potatoes.

"I can't see any opening," cried Arthur. Then, perceiving that his words were not understood, he put up his hand to his mouth and shouted, "We want to get down into the mine!"

"Bless your heart!" exclaimed the old man in surprise, "ye'll never be able to do that. The shaft han't been used these thirty years; it's choked to the top with rubbish; it's not a month's hard work that would clear it out."

Asahel and his companion exchanged looks of disappointment.

"I should know about it if any one does," continued the speaker, passing his bony fingers through his hair; "for warn't it my own poor brother that was killed in the mine by the 'plosion; and warn't it my mother as took to her bed, and ne'er held up her head agen arter it! I say it was a sin and a shame to send poor souls groping about in the darkness, where the blessed light of day never came, just to have the breath blown out of them at last; and if more folk go down to throw

away their lives, I'll not be one of 'em, that's all."

"There is no use in staying here longer," said Asahel, "we had better turn our steps homeward;" and the youths set out on the way towards Eshcol.

"So we cannot so much as enter the mine!" exclaimed Arthur; "the very opening to it is blocked us."

"I hope that it's not to be an emblem of our search after happiness," said his companion.

"Well," observed Arthur, "when I am a man, and have plenty of money, I'll have that shaft cleared of its rubbish, and explore the old mine to the very end of it."

"And perhaps be blown up like the miner."

"I'm not afraid," said Arthur, boldly. "I'd venture in to-morrow, if I could, and take my chance of fire-damp, choke-damp, carbonic acid gas, and all the other terrors of the mine. You do not fear death, do you, Asahel?"

"Perhaps not death itself; I think that I could face that, but,"—he lowered his tone, as though speaking to himself (for it was, perhaps, a consequence of the solitary life which he led that Asahel sometimes forgot that he had an auditor),—"but one can't help thinking of what will come after death—the pain, the punishment in the unknown

world — it is that from which we naturally shrink."

"Only the wicked," said Arthur, quickly.

"Only with the wicked is pain everlasting; but you know that we all have sinned in some way, even the wisest and the best, so all must suffer for a longer or shorter time, for suffering is like the shadow of sin. And it is these strange, unknown torments, which all must pass through before they are fit to enter paradise—before they are purified from earthly stains, which make death seem terrible to me."

"You are just like a Papist!" exclaimed Arthur, "if you think that your soul must be purified in purgatory."

"Do not you?" cried Asahel eagerly, stopping and looking Arthur full in the face.

'Not I—no Protestant does; that is all Popish superstition."

"Do you think that we are saved freely—forgiven entirely—that we are happy at once when we die? But how can it be—it hardly seems right —God is so just—how can sinners escape?" and the countenance of the youth as he spoke expressed perplexity and doubt.

"I don't see the use of talking or thinking about such matters," said Arthur, quickening his pace.

"Neither of us is likely to die for a long time to come."

"But we have parents in the unknown world!" cried Asahel, with a quivering lip; "it is impossible that we should not long to know what their state may be now! Sometimes when I awake at night I feel so wretched about my mother! Though the appointed eleven months for repeating prayers for her soul have passed long ago, I still say them morning and night. I never forgot them but once, and then, oh, how miserable I was! I felt that I never could forgive myself. I spent the next day in fasting and prayer."

"That could do your mother no possible good," said Arthur, half smiling to himself at the weakness of his companion.

"I don't know—I can't say; oh, that there were but anything certain and sure. I would give everything that I have in the world to believe, like you, that souls are happy after death. Will you not tell me, Arthur, what is your reason for thinking it?"

Arthur's cheek flushed; he looked annoyed, and answered abruptly, "Do you take me for a parson?" He was ashamed in the presence of a Jew not to be able to give a reason for the hope that was in him; he was ashamed, perhaps, to feel how much

less interest he had taken in the important subject than a Jew.

There was not another word spoken by either till they had reached the gate of Eshcol.

"Arthur," said Asahel, suddenly, "would you wait a little while for me here? I have something that I have longed to show you ever since the day that I saw you first. I think that you may tell me what I most desire to know; there is no one whom I can question except you."

"Make haste then," said Arthur, "I must soon be at home;" and leaning his back against the gate, he awaited Asahel's return with an uncomfortable, dissatisfied feeling in his breast, for which he could scarcely have accounted.

CHAPTER VI.

SOLEMN QUESTIONS.

ASAHEL'S light step was soon heard again on the gravel path. He held something pressed to his bosom, as if it were the object of jealous care. Arthur leaned forward, half expecting that some rare jewel or singular curiosity would be presented to his view, and felt disappointed when he saw only a few soiled pages fastened loosely together by a thread.

"Can you tell me what these are?" said Asahel, holding forth the papers, but retaining his grasp on them still.

"I don't understand these strange letters," replied Arthur.

"The characters are German," said Asahel.

"I cannot read a word of that language."

"I do not wish you to read, I can do that my-

self; German was the native tongue of my mother; I wish you to tell me, when you hear the contents of these pages, whether you can guess from what work they have been taken."

"Where did you pick up the pages?" said Arthur; "they look as if they had been thrown aside as waste paper."

"Is it not strange?" replied Asahel, mysteriously; "I found them in a box of German ornaments, which was given to me by my grandfather. They were employed to wrap up some little glass figures. I unfolded them, read and re-read them, and now I almost know them by heart."

"And what do they contain?" said Arthur, with some little curiosity.

"Something so beautiful, so touching," exclaimed Asahel; "something unlike any fiction that I ever read, but more wondrous than any history could be. These seem to be leaves torn from a larger work; the last scenes in the life of one who died as never man died before! Think of a trial," continued Asahel, with solemn earnestness, "in which the accusers were the criminals, the judge a coward, the prisoner alone spotless and pure! Think of one unjustly sentenced to a cruel, shameful death—who could calmly endure his terrible fate—who could pity the crowd who followed him, pray for the

murderers who tortured him, and promise a place in Paradise to a dying thief at his side, as though the sufferer on earth were a king in heaven; not a man, but a god!"

"He was; he is so," said Arthur, with reverence.

"You believe, then, that the Being who suffered was our long-expected Messiah?" cried Asahel, looking into the eyes of his companion, as if he would search out his very soul.

"What you have been telling me is all from our Bible," replied Arthur, embarrassed by the gaze.

"I suspected so—I thought so," said the Jewish youth, "but I feared to ask any one but you. Oh, if you only knew what thoughts crowd in upon my soul! Do not leave me Arthur; do not leave me," he cried, as Arthur turned round to depart; "you only can satisfy my mind. There are mysteries in your wonderful faith which I cannot understand, but which the very difficulty makes me more anxious to penetrate. If this Being was indeed what you believe that he was, why did he permit himself to be scourged and slain; why did he not come down in thunder and lightning, and strike his foes dead at his feet? If he was the Mighty One of Israel, why did he suffer and die?"

A few words from the Creed rose to Arthur's mind, and, almost unconsciously, he uttered them

aloud: "'For us men, and for our salvation,'" he said; then, uncomfortable at being forced into a conversation which he was utterly unqualified to pursue—feeling shy about speaking on religion at all, and anxious to escape from further questioning —again he turned to leave the gate.

"One moment—just one moment," cried the young Jew, detaining him with an eager grasp; "just answer me one word more. Do you believe that these pages are all true?"

"I know that they are," replied Arthur with decision, looking indignant at the bare idea of a doubt.

"How do you know it?" cried Asahel, anxiously.

The question was too deep for the boy. He had no power to speak of the thousand witnesses—from nature, from history, from the pages of the Old Testament, fulfilled prophecies, types accomplished —which loudly proclaim the truth of the blessed Gospel. In all these matters he was ignorant indeed, and the sense of ignorance is mortifying to pride. Arthur wrenched his arm from Asahel's hold.

"I cannot stay longer," he said, with some appearance of irritation; "my uncle will be expecting me back;" and Arthur hastened away, mentally resolving that some time should elapse before he visited Eshcol again.

"He does *not* believe it," said Asahel to himself, as, replacing the pages in his bosom, he slowly returned to the house. "I am certain that he cannot believe that wondrous history to be true. If he knew that a poor mortal like himself, an earthly friend, had for his sake endured to be reviled, and buffeted, and scourged—that another had given his life to save him—could Arthur, could any being with a heart in his bosom, care so little for the memory of that friend—feel so little concern about his sufferings? Oh no; his whole soul would be filled with admiration, gratitude, and love; his heart would glow with feelings so warm that his lips could not choose but speak them! I am disappointed in my friend!" cried Asahel, as he entered his room and threw himself down on a seat. "Either Arthur denies the truth and would mislead me as to his belief, or he is made of a very different metal from that I thought that he was. He can receive the greatest benefits without gratitude, hear the most glorious deeds without admiration, and feel ten times as much interest in some trifling game as in his own eternal salvation! And how little has he cared for mine!" Asahel rose, and paced up and down the room. "Has he found the treasure and not asked me to share it? has he known of a Saviour, and never so much as opened his lips to

tell the good tidings to his friend? No, no; he cannot believe them himself; he is not so cold-hearted, so unworthy. And I—what do I believe myself?" Asahel pressed both his hands tightly over his brow, as though to keep in his thoughts: "I am bewildered—lost in difficulties and doubts. I have no one to help me, no one to teach me; I am like a ship without a rudder, tossed here and there amongst the waves! I do not know what to think or to believe!" He paused in his rapid walk and stood before the window, through which the south breeze, laden with perfume, blew softly, with a low whispering murmur. "I know what I *feel*," said the young Jew to himself; "my mind may be bewildered, my judgment confused, but there is something in that mysterious history which finds its way straight to the heart. I feel," he cried, fixing his gaze on the sky as if searching for something beyond its blue depths—"I feel that, had I been present at that awful scene, I should have been one of those who lamented—not of those who reviled. I should have pitied—no; I should rather have worshipped!—he was so calm, so holy, so heavenly! Oh!" exclaimed Asahel, forgetting for the moment all but the transcendent purity and dignity of the character which he contemplated, "I feel that I would almost endure all that that dying thief en-

dured to have heard the blessed words that he heard —to have gazed for a moment, even from a cross, on the face of that heavenly Being!" Asahel started at his own words, and instinctively glanced round, to be certain that they had not been overheard.

His waking thoughts haunted him that night in his dreams with even more vivid power. He imagined himself in some place deep, deep under ground—a place which, but for its size, he might have deemed a grave. With the strange indistinctness of a dream, Asahel fancied himself dead and yet living—to have passed all earthly pain, and yet to be in dread of some suffering before him. There was a painful nightmare oppression upon the spirit of the sleeping youth. He had a vague idea of some trial having taken place, and that he was himself the criminal. Of the nature of his guilt he had no clear impression; but he knew that he was condemned and sentenced to some doom, all the more terrible because unknown. Ministers of vengeance crowded around him: he rather felt their presence than saw them, there was such gloomy darkness on every side. A terrible grasp was upon Asahel; in vain he struggled to shake it off, in vain strove to utter a cry for mercy. He had neither power to move nor to speak; and the vague terror

of that dark dream forced cold drops to the brow and the lip of the slumberer.

Then came a sudden sense of strange, unutterable relief. The grasp was relaxed, Asahel breathed freely, a sweet breeze seemed to fan him, a soft light to shine around him, and a voice like that of a whispering angel murmured the words—"Free forgiveness." Some Being stood beside Asahel whose face he could not see; a mantle of light appeared to hide it. All that Asahel beheld in his dream was a hand, which held out to him a parchment signed and sealed. "Free forgiveness" was written on that scroll. A thrill ran through the veins of Asahel. The parchment was signed in blood! A light fell on the hand which held it forth—that hand was pierced and bleeding! Asahel fell at the feet of his Deliverer, clasped his knees, bathed his feet with his tears, and with the cry, "My Lord and my Saviour!" he awoke, to find himself alone and in darkness.

Asahel sprang from his couch, agitated and trembling. He threw open his shutters, and the clear soft moonlight came pouring into his little room. He sank on his knees and tried to pray; no words would come to his lips but those which he had uttered in his dream, and might a Jew dare to pronounce them? Asahel threw himself again on

his couch, closed his eyes, and endeavoured to sleep. Oh, if he could but dream that dream again!—find himself again at the feet of that Being towards whom his heart appeared to be drawn by so strange, so irresistible a tie! But sleep came no more to Asahel that night; and he rose with the early dawn to avail himself of the first morning light to read over again the pages from the Gospel.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EVENING AT MOORCROFT HATCH.

MEANWHILE Arthur had returned to the gloomy old Hatch in bad spirits and worse temper. He was disappointed about the mine, annoyed by Asahel's conversation, and secretly discontented with himself. He felt that he had fallen in the opinion of his companion; but he would not acknowledge to his own mind that it was with justice that he had done so. It was pleasanter to self-love to accuse Asahel of changeability and enthusiasm; to be impatient at his wild dreamy fancies, and attribute them to weakness of mind occasioned by such wretched seclusion from the world. But one fact was but too clear to Arthur: visits to Eshcol, which had been the greatest enjoyment of his life, must now be suspended for a while, for he was resolved not to put himself soon

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in the way of being asked questions which he knew not how to answer.

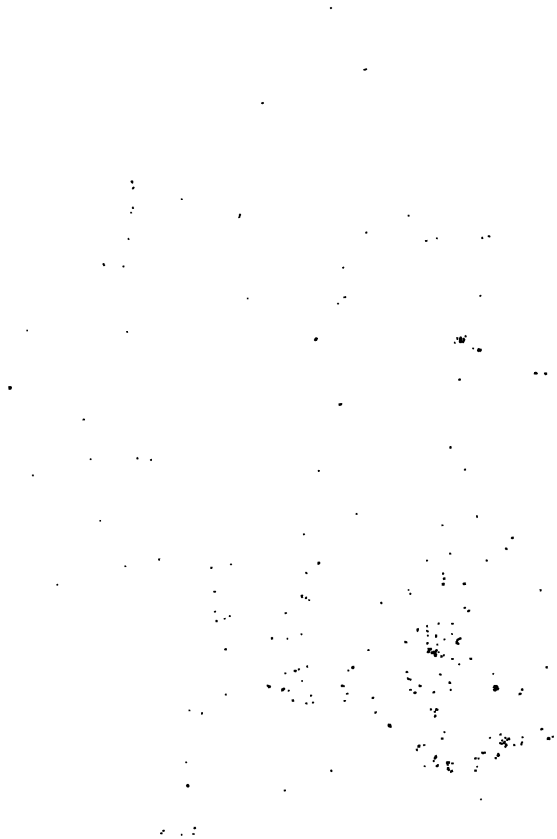
Horace Moorcroft was a sufferer that evening from his pupil's unfortunate expedition. Arthur was inattentive, irritable, and idle, and sorely tried the patience of his stern and melancholy tutor. But poor Phemie suffered a good deal more, for with her the impetuous boy put himself under no restraint. It was strange that it never occurred to one whose temper was not ungenerous that it was hard to wreak the impatience which he felt upon his unoffending little sister, and unmanly to make her helplessness a reason for treating her with unkindness.

It was not till, after one of his surly answers, Arthur glanced at the face of poor Phemie, and saw the glistening moisture beneath her lashes, that the heart of her brother smote him.

"Why, Phemie, what nonsense it is to take a joke in that way!" cried Arthur.

"I did not know that you were joking," murmured Phemie.

"Joking or not, I never meant to vex you. Come, we'll have no more of this," said the boy; "I vote that we have a little sociable game. You bring the chess-board, Phemie; I'll give you a lesson in playing."



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Phemie smiled through her tears, and ran for the board. It was in the attic room of her brother. It never occurred to the mind of Arthur that he might as well have gone for it himself.

The board was soon arranged, and the pieces placed. Arthur commenced his lesson in a somewhat pompous style; and gave Phemie fair warning, as he moved out his queen, that she must expect checkmate in three or four moves. But Arthur was surprised to see how quietly his attack was forestalled, the threatened square guarded, his scheme defeated. Wherever he moved he found his adversary prepared—playing slowly, cautiously, as if always on her guard, while in his impatience he lost several pieces; till at length, to his astonishment no less than his wrath, he found that checkmate had been silently given him!

This was too much for the philosophy of Arthur. He pushed back his chair with such violence that he overthrew it; one angry sweep of his arm scattered the pieces in every direction; and Phemie might have had to endure another gust of temper from the adversary whom she had defeated, had not the entrance of Horace Moorcroft stopped further explosion on the part of Arthur.

A glance at the scene before him showed the uncle the state of affairs. "Euphemia," said he

calmly to his little niece, who was down on the floor picking up the chess-men, "would you oblige me by lighting the candle? the matches you will find on the mantelpiece. It is for those who throw down to pick up," he added sternly, fixing his eye upon Arthur; "and let no one in future attempt to play at chess who has not sufficient self-command to lose a game without losing temper also."

Horace sat down to his books, and waited patiently till Phemie, having mounted a foot-stool, succeeded in reaching the matches and lighting the candle. He then made her sit down beside him, to prevent her going to the assistance of her brother. Arthur felt very angry and very uncomfortable; he was conscious that he had placed himself in a ridiculous, undignified position in the eyes of his uncle. The scattered pieces lay before him, tokens of his double discomfiture. For some minutes Arthur would not stoop to raise them; till observing that his uncle appeared buried in his book, and that Phemie, with her eyes wandering from hers, was glancing uneasily in his direction, he hastily gathered up the chess-men, threw them helter-skelter into the box, and hastened up-stairs to his room.

Arthur was soon tired of sitting there in the dusk, for no candle was allowed, by the rules of the house, to be lighted in the sleeping-rooms till bed-time.

His thoughts were not pleasant companions; they were constantly returning to Asahel, dwelling on his look of earnest, intense inquiry, and revolving what answers might have been given to his questions had Arthur had more leisure for reflection. What the young Hebrew had said of the state of the soul after death, full of ignorance as his ideas had been, recurred disagreeably to Arthur, as he sat alone in his dull, darkening attic, with perfect stillness around him. As I have mentioned before, Arthur, though brought up in a Christian land, had very vague notions on the subject of religion. He supposed that if he behaved respectably, was sorry when he had done wrong, went to church sometimes, and said his prayers, he would be saved as a matter of course. He never considered what a price had been paid for his safety—what gratitude, what devotion of soul is required from those who are Christians indeed—how hopeless would be his own state but for unmerited mercy—how weak and sinful and helpless he was in the sight of Him who beholds the heart!

Arthur tried to drive away dull thoughts as well as he could; again and again he wished himself back at school, or on any other spot of earth rather than Moorcroft Hatch. He tried to cheer himself by whistling, but disliked the sound of his own

voice in the dull, quiet place. He then looked over his play-box, examining his old treasures rather by feeling than sight, gave a heavy sigh over his bat and his marbles, and at last lighted upon a soiled pack of cards.

It was quite a discovery for Arthur. "I'll teach Phemie to play," he said to himself. "The little creature is not likely to beat me with these. How lucky that I brought them from school!" And having recovered his temper in his solitude, and being pleased at finding anything which promised amusement, Arthur sauntered down to the sitting-room, looking much more amiable than he had done when he had left it.

The stern, handsome countenance of Horace, with the strong shadows which the light cast upon it, appeared in striking contrast to the little, innocent, childish face at his side. Poor Phemie was weary of her book, a ponderous tomé to which Horace had directed her attention, which was as heavy in reading as it was in weight. She had been longing for the return of Arthur, but afraid to leave the room in search of him.

Arthur disliked the economy of his uncle in nothing more than in his chary expenditure of candles; the circumstance of only one being lighted at a time obliging him during evening hours to keep

close to Mr. Moorcroft. Horace seldom, however, appeared to take much notice of the children, but, pursuing his own occupations, left them to amuse themselves as they pleased.

"Would you like me to teach you another kind of game, Phemie?" whispered Arthur to his sister, who sat between him and their uncle.

"I should like it very much," replied Phemie, in the same low tone, shutting her large volume, and making the candle flicker by the fanning of its pages as she did so.

"Did you ever see things like these before?" said Arthur, drawing forth his pack, but keeping it rather in the shadow.

"No; what odd-looking things! What do you call them?" said Phemie.

"Cards," replied her brother.

The word was not given in a very audible voice, but absorbed as he was in study, it struck sharply on the ear of Horace. He looked up hastily and said, "What have you there?" in a tone louder and sterner than usual.

"An old pack of cards," was Arthur's reply.

A sudden flush of crimson overspread the pale face of Horace, the veins in his forehead swelled, his lip quivered with strange, terrible emotion. "Give them to me," he said hoarsely; and there was

something in his aspect which made it impossible to disobey the command. He held the cards to the candle, his hand trembling as he did so—threw the lighted pack into the grate—watched the pasteboard blistering, blackening, shrivelling—placed the half-consumed pieces upon those which were burning, till nothing but a heap of cinders remained in the grate!

Arthur's face was red with anger. He rose from his seat. Horace, with a gesture of dignity, motioned him to resume it.

"There is no harm in cards," muttered Arthur angrily, as he sat down; "many excellent people play at cards."

Phemie glanced timidly at her uncle, afraid of the effect which Arthur's words might have upon him, for she had never before seen Horace show such emotion as he had exhibited that evening; but Mr. Moorcroft's reply was not in anger.

"Yes, Arthur, excellent people may play at cards; and I have seen men in India who could handle unharmed the venomous cobra di capello. But if you had once been bitten by the reptile—if you had known what it was to feel its poison burning in your veins—if your health had been hopelessly shattered, all your enjoyment in life destroyed"—the voice of Horace rose to passionate energy as he

proceeded—"would you not hate the very sight of the serpent—would you endure to see it in the hand of a brother's son?"

Arthur's spirit quailed before the sudden burst of anguish which had been wrung from the strong, calm man before him. A curtain seemed for a moment to be raised to give a glimpse of some dark mystery behind; and interest and curiosity, not unmingled with awe, took in Arthur's mind the place of the anger which had been his feeling at first. His uncle's gloom was, then, in some way connected with the vice of gambling—perhaps his rigid economy was so also. But was it he himself who had fallen into this sin, or was he crushed by the errors of another? Speculations of this kind so filled the head of Arthur that night, that he almost forgot Asahel and Oldshaft.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLANS AND PROJECTS.

ARTHUR was an active, energetic boy, and now that he had been driven from all his resources for amusement, he set his mind on discovering something that might supply occupation for the hours of leisure which hung so heavily on his hands. There was now no use in going to Oldshaft—he disliked the idea of visiting Eshcol—he was tired to death of exploring the shores of the bay in search of shells which he could not find, or of crabs so small that not even a schoolboy thought it worth his while to catch them. Arthur resolved on the morning following the day on which he had visited Oldshaft with Asahel, to examine the strip of shingle below the cliff, at some distance from the Hatch, where he thought that his search was more likely to be rewarded by an abundance of shells and sea-weeds.

"I will build a little marine grotto in the garden," said Arthur to himself, "and that will be a great amusement to Phemie." Whether Phemie's amusement were the first object in the mind of her brother may well be a matter of doubt, as his preparations for his exploring expedition were made without at all consulting her convenience. Arthur had no basket in which to put the marine treasures which he intended to collect; and the first thing which struck his eye as capable of supplying the place of one was Phemie's neat cotton work-bag, of which he unceremoniously took possession.

"This will be the very thing for me!" cried Arthur, not to Phemie, who was absent, but to himself; and though the initials E. M., prettily marked on the hem, stared him in the face, as though to remind him of the owner, and work and thimble were both left in the bag, he carried it off without giving a thought to the trouble which he might occasion, or even informing poor Phemie of what had become of her property.

On Arthur hastened merrily enough, for he was always eager in the pursuit of pleasure, and full of hope as to his success. He soon passed the limits of the bay, and found himself on the ridge of shingle, on which the waves broke with a harsh, grating sound. Lank pieces of brown sea-weed, like India-

rubber, intermixed with more delicate green, strewed the space close up to the cliff, the lower part of which was studded with innumerable tiny shell-fish, clinging close to the rocky wall. Arthur put down his bag, and taking up a large pebble, succeeded in knocking off some of them, though not without breaking their delicate fabrics. He wandered on, interested in his occupation, and always hoping to find something more worthy of his trouble, till he was startled by a voice which sounded from above; and looking up, he saw the face of his uncle bending over the high cliff.

"Arthur! Arthur! go back;—do you not know that the high-tide will cover the spot on which you stand?" shouted Horace Moorcroft from the summit.

"It is not high tide, and it won't be for hours to come," called out Arthur at the top of his voice.

"Go back at once, without one moment's delay," was the reply. The face above looked sternly anxious, and Arthur, muttering to himself something about ridiculous fears, and being treated like a child, slowly and reluctantly retraced his steps. Just as he re-entered the sweep of the bay, he was joined by Mr. Moorcroft from the path down the cliff.

"It is my desire, Arthur," said the uncle, "and if that does not suffice, it is my positive command,

that you never again visit that part of the beach which lies under the cliff."

"Of course I would not go when there was any danger," was Arthur's sulky reply.

"Of the danger I must be the judge," said Horace sternly. Then aware that his anxiety had made him show caution which might be deemed extreme, he added, while a darker shade of sadness passed over his face, "I could not see you run even the slightest risk of sharing the fate of your father."

"I never heard the particulars of my father's death. Was he drowned?" said Arthur, glancing up at his uncle.

Horace pressed his lips tightly together, made no reply, but walked more rapidly onward. Arthur was sorry at having asked a question which re-opened a deep and painful wound.

Arthur returned home disappointed and wearied, and all his attempts to amuse himself having failed, he fell back upon his last resource—a long conversation with his sister.

Phemie was cutting out some coarse calico to give as work to some poor girls at Oldshaft. Phemie was clever and ready with her fingers, and plied her large scissors with a skill which would hardly have been expected from one of her childish appearance.

"Are you not going to Eshcol to-day?" she said, when Arthur, with a weary yawn, threw himself on a seat beside her.

"Eshcol! no; I don't know when I shall betake myself to that place again," was the rather irritable reply.

"You have not quarrelled with Asahel surely?" said Phemie, who perceived that something had gone wrong.

"Quarrelled! who talked of quarrelling? He is not one with whom one could get up a row if one wished it. But he is so strange—he talks so oddly —he has such very extraordinary notions."

"About what?" asked Phemie.

"About religion."

"No wonder, poor boy, for he is a Jew. I did not know that he ever spoke to you, Arthur, about such things. It must be very painful to hear him; he must be so sadly, so very sadly in error."

"I'll tell you what, Phemie," said Arthur, "Asahel has ten times more religion in him than I have, or you either."

The young girl looked at her brother in great surprise; then said, in a very low tone, "But Asahel does not know the truth; he has not learned to believe in our Lord."

"He has learned to love him," said Arthur.

A bright gleam, like sudden sunshine, passed over Phemie's face. She clasped her hands and exclaimed, "Oh, Arthur, do you think that he is a Christian?"

"I do not know; I don't believe that he knows himself. He is like some one groping about in the dark, feeling on all sides for something to guide him." And Arthur, whose memory was clear and strong, repeated almost word for word his conversation with the Hebrew youth; while Phemie, neglecting everything else in the intense interest of listening, sat with her eyes rivetted upon the speaker.

"Oh, Arthur, how could you leave him so?" was Phemie's exclamation when her brother had concluded.

"What was I to say?" replied Arthur, sharply.

"Oh, there was so much—so much!" cried Phemie, pressing her forehead; "if only my dear cousin Miller had been there. No one explains the Bible as she does."

"Why, Phemie, you look as if the weight of the world had been suddenly put upon these little shoulders. What is it to you what Asahel believes?"

"What is it to me!" repeated Phemie, with feeling; "if I saw any one drowning, should I look on and not care? or shut up in a burning house, should

I not long to open the door to them? Oh! I have thought what we could do," she exclaimed suddenly and joyfully; "you can carry a Bible to Asahel—my Bible; it has references, and marks, and—"

"What! would you give that Bible, of which you are so fond, to a stranger?"

"Cousin gave it to me," said Phemie thoughtfully, wrote my name in it on the blank leaf, with a beautiful prayer and a verse; I should be very, very sorry to part with it, but—"

"I don't see why you should trouble yourself about the matter," said Arthur; "it is certainly no business of yours."

"I thought—cousin used to teach me that whenever we were given an opportunity of doing good to another, it showed us that God had set us work to do for him, which we could not leave undone without sin."

Arthur made no answer to this. The idea had never entered his mind that he had any work to do for God.

"If I give away my Bible, Arthur," said Phemie, changing her tone, "would you not let me read out of yours till I could save money to buy a new one?"

"Well, you could take mine whenever you choose," replied Arthur, who, it is to be feared,

would have missed some story-book more. "But why not keep your own Bible, and wait till you could get another to give away?"

Phemie looked pleased for a moment at the suggestion, then said gravely, "But if Asahel should die in the meanwhile."

"Die!" laughed Arthur, "he's not thinking of dying. Though," he added, remembering the fragile appearance of the form, and delicate beauty of the face of the youth, "he's just the one that, in a romance, would be made to go off in a decline."

"Arthur, you will take my Bible to him to-morrow."

"I!" exclaimed Arthur, not very courteously, "I'm not going to turn colporteur, and hawk Bibles about the country."

"You know that this is something quite different. You have only to carry a book to your friend."

"And get myself into a scrape with the old Jew!"

"But, Arthur—"

"I'm not going to do it," said Arthur decidedly; "you had better say no more about the matter."

"I don't know how I could send it," said Phemie, looking perplexed; "if I could but go myself—"

"Phemie, you're absurd!" exclaimed Arthur, finding it much easier to make the assertion than he would have done to prove it. "I wish that I

had never spoken to you at all about Asahel or his questions; you girls take such nonsensical notions into your heads, no one with common sense can stand it!" And more discontented with himself than ever, Arthur sauntered whistling out of the room.

Phemie did not for some time resume her occupation. She sat with her head resting on her hand thinking of Asahel, and by what means she could convey her Bible to the young inquirer. She was not one to be laughed out of what she thought right, though her shyness made ridicule very annoying to her, and she was not inclined to speak again to her brother on the subject of Asahel's belief. If she could see Arthur's companion herself, would she venture to place the Bible in his hand? Phemie had heard so much of Asahel from her brother that she scarcely regarded him as a stranger, and the descriptions of him were little calculated to alarm even a timid girl. Therefore, though distrustful of her own courage, Phemie hoped to muster up sufficient resolution. But how was she to meet with the Jew? She must ask her uncle's leave to accompany Arthur to Eshcol. This to Phemie was a more formidable effort. Horace had never spoken to her an angry word, but his manner inspired her with fear; she never dared to be the first to address

him. Phemie thought much over the matter, formed imaginary conversations with Asahel, endeavoured to recall all that she had been taught on religion by the pious instructress of her childhood, till her head almost ached with the effort; nor did she retire to rest that night, nor rise again in the morning, without fervent and repeated prayers for the young Jew whom she had never seen.

CHAPTER IX.

A GRAND DISCOVERY.

ASAHEL had been disappointed and mortified that day at not receiving his accustomed visit from Arthur. He waited long at the iron gate, looked wearily down the dusty road, listened for Arthur's well known whistle, and returned at last into the house with a heavy and anxious heart. Disappointed as the enthusiastic youth had been in his friend, he still felt Arthur's sympathy and companionship something which he could not bear to part with. Asahel feared that he had offended young Moorcroft, though he vainly endeavoured to recall any word of his own that could have given just cause for displeasure. It was evident that Arthur did not like to speak about his religion; but had not Asahel done him injustice in supposing that dislike arose from indifference or ignorance;

might it not be that he shrank from entering on a subject so sacred with one whom he deemed an unbeliever? Thus Asahel reasoned with himself, perplexed, mortified, and more than ever anxious to gain more knowledge of the mysterious Being of whom he had read in the torn pages of the Gospel.

Asahel's religion was not the clear, calm faith derived from early instruction in the Scriptures; that faith which, through the power of the Spirit, pervades the whole character, influences every act, is like the pure light of dawn shining more and more unto the perfect day. There was too much of imagination, too much of excitement in the mind of the youth. He rather worshipped the idea of a hero, who more than came up to his highest conception of unearthly virtue, courage, and self-devotion, than realized that in one so exalted he had found a Master to serve, a King to obey. Asahel was full of ignorance and error; this was indeed the inevitable consequence of his position. He had been like one shut up in a dark tower, the thick walls of prejudice built up around him. Fancy had, indeed, often cast a flickering, fire-fly gleam on his soul through the medium of the poets whose works he had read. This was beautiful in itself, but it failed to enlighten. The Old Testament Scriptures, like a golden lamp, had shed sufficient light to show

him some of his nearest and most obvious duties, while they directed his hopes towards a Messiah. The commandments were written on the memory of Asahel, and he tried in a certain degree to obey them, though from no principle of love towards the awful Being whom he had learned only to regard with fear. The few leaves which he had read from the Gospel had suddenly poured upon Asahel a beam of bright, transcendent lustre; but it rather dazzled than served to guide. There was some danger of his looking upon the most solemn realities as beautiful visions, of letting dreamy imaginings take the place of solid, practical religion.

We leave him in his painful doubt and perplexity to return to our friends at Moorcroft Hatch.

The next morning Phemie waited her opportunity of speaking alone to her uncle. She found none till Arthur had as usual gone out for his walk after early dinner. She noticed that he did not proceed as usual in the direction of Eshcol, but turned more to the right, as if going to the hill which rose above Oldshaft, to which the most direct route lay across the top of the cliff.

Phemie sat alone in the room with her uncle, turning over the leaves of a book without reading, and wondering, timid girl that she was, how she should commence the conversation. Horace looked as usual as

if his whole soul were given to the volume before him.

Phemie rose, and purposely made a little noise in pushing back her chair, to attract his attention This had no effect. She softly moved between Horace and the light, and stood uneasily twisting the strings of her little black apron.

The grave eyes were raised from the page. "Did you wish to ask me anything?" said Horace.

"I wished to ask if I might walk beyond the grounds," replied Phemie, in a low, timid voice.

"Certainly," replied her uncle; "I thought that Mrs. Vesey took you with her whenever she went to Oldshaft."

"I did not mean to go with Mrs. Vesey," said Phemie.

"Ah! you would have a little variety in your walks. You shall accompany me, Euphemia; more exercise will benefit your health."

Phemie did not know what to reply, but she did not move from the spot. Assuredly a long silent walk with her uncle was one of the last things which she, or any other young lady of twelve, would have regarded as a pleasure.

"Would you like to go with me?" asked Horace, perceiving her hesitation.

Poor Phemie coloured to the roots of her hair, she

was sorely tempted to sacrifice truth to the fear of offending her formidable uncle; but candour was one of the leading features in the character of the little girl; she hung down her head, and a faint "No" was just audible from her lips.

Had Phemie ventured to look up for a moment she would have seen the melancholy face before her relaxed into something approaching to a smile; but she dared not raise her eyes from the ground.

"You wish, then, to accompany Arthur? He is hardly a suitable escort; and yet you are so steady—" Horace was revolving in his mind the uneasiness which he had felt on seeing his nephew wandering along the beach, which would be covered by the waves at high water, and he was calculating whether Phemie might not act as a useful drag-chain on the venturesome and somewhat wilful boy.

"Will you promise me one thing, Euphemia," said Horace, laying his hand on the head of his little niece with unusual gentleness in his manner; "will you promise me that nothing shall ever induce you to walk on the beach below the cliff?"

"It was not there that I wished to go," answered Phemie.

"Have I your word that you never will wander there?"

"I will not, uncle, since you forbid me; but may I go to other places with Arthur?"

"Where you will," said Horace, resuming his reading.

Phemie walked quietly out of the room, then ran up-stairs, joyous as a freed bird, took her Bible from its shelf, placed neat little markers in various leaves, drew pencil lines opposite such verses as she thought would be striking to a Jew, and in her hopes for Asahel, and the pleasure of helping an inquirer, almost forgot that she was to part, for the sake of a stranger, with one of her dearest earthly possessions.

Meanwhile Arthur pursued his solitary walk in the direction of Oldshaft, but without any definite object. He looked often to his right, where, beyond the cliff, he could view the broad blue expanse of the sea, dotted here and there with a white sail, shining like a snow-flake in the sun. He turned over in his mind all his projects for entering the naval profession. He had bright visions of the blue uniform and gold-banded cap, which have such attractions for a boy; fancied how he would distinguish himself in the service, and seemed already to imagine half-a-dozen medals glittering on his breast, till he unconsciously assumed something of a swagger in his gait.

Thus sauntering along, lost in his own fancies,

Arthur reached the foot of the bare, bleak hill, which hid from his view the hamlet of Oldshaft, and which lay some hundred yards from the edge of the cliff, so that he could either go round or pass over the hill. Arthur chose the latter way, for the strong fresh breeze on the upland was pleasant to the boy. He pursued the most wild and unfrequented path; the bare, desolate spot, looking as if never trodden by the foot of man. Arthur had not gone far before a wild rabbit started from behind a furze-bush some way before him, and darting off at speed, was out of sight in a moment. Arthur was in the mood for a chase, but the rapidity of the little creature's movements had made pursuit quite hopeless. He contented himself with flinging a stone in the direction in which it had vanished; and thinking that perhaps it had left young ones in a burrow behind it, he scrambled up to the place from whence it had started.

Arthur found a hole of some size in the side of the hill, quite concealed from sight by the furze-bush. He knelt down, and holding back the prickly screen with one hand, with the other felt about in the hole. It must have been a deep one, for he could not touch the end of it, and his curiosity was awakened at once. He looked round for a stick, and after a short search succeeded in finding one to

answer his purpose. With it he endeavoured to sound the depth of the hole, but found no resistance when he held it downward in a sloping direction.

"This is very strange!" exclaimed Arthur. "This hole appears too deep for any mere burrow; I wonder if it is possible—if it can be an opening," —he started to his feet with delight at the idea— "an opening leading down into the mine!"

With all the eager hope natural to his age, Arthur, pulling off his jacket to expedite his work, began labouring to enlarge the hole sufficiently to admit his person. He worked as though his life depended on his efforts, till the toil-drops poured from his brow, and he was so much tired that he was forced to pause to take breath. The sun was sloping towards the west; the hour was past at which Arthur was always expected to resume his lessons with his uncle; but still the boy went labouring on. He managed at length, with some little difficulty, to squeeze himself into the hole, going backwards that he might be able to keep his face towards the air and the light. What was the rapture of Arthur to find that when he had descended some short space, the hole grew evidently wider; there seemed nothing to obstruct his further progress; he could even raise himself to an erect position!

Arthur felt as Columbus may have felt on discovering a second world! But he was afraid to go further into the darkness, especially as he was alone. A light would be absolutely necessary if he ventured deeper into the mine. Arthur scrambled out of his hole, and impatient as he was to communicate his grand discovery to Asahel da Costa, his chief concern was lest the heap of earth which he had scooped out in enlarging the hole might reveal its position to some passer-by, and so afford to a stranger the opportunity of first exploring the depths of the mine. Arthur spent some time in making everything look as smooth and undisturbed as he could, rejoicing in the size of the furze-bush, without which his object could never have been accomplished. Then putting on his jacket, careless of the late hour, with nothing in his head but the prospect of endless amusement, adventures, and even wealth, which appeared now to be opening before him, Arthur dashed off to Eshcol, and arrived at the gate so breathless that it was some moments before he could sufficiently regain his voice to shout aloud for Asahel.

CHAPTER X.

THE EXPEDITION.

NEVER had Arthur's patience been more sorely tried than it was on that evening. He called out the name of his friend again and again, but in vain; and he disliked trying the bell, for he had an idea that though the old Jew might tolerate his grandson's taking an occasional walk with a companion, anything like a visit at that hour would be regarded and resented as an intrusion. Asahel had never yet ventured to invite him to pass the limit of the gate.

Arthur, however, at length laid his hand upon the bell-handle; but just as he was about to pull it, the well-known sound of Asahel's light step rejoiced his impatient ear.

"Why, Arthur, can it be you, so late!" exclaimed Asahel, grasping his hand. "I was half afraid that you had given me up."

"Oh, Asahel! I have such glorious news!"

"I cannot hear it now—there is the gong sounding for dinner—I cannot keep my grandfather waiting—I will listen to everything to morrow—"

"I will be here at two," exclaimed Arthur, too eager to speak to give Asahel time to conclude his sentence; "and oh! I had almost forgotten—Asahel, you must bring with you a candle and a box of matches; we shall need them; I have discovered a new way into the mine!"

Asahel looked as much surprised as young Moorcroft could desire, but could not stay longer at the gate, even to talk over a subject so important. Arthur then returned home at a more sober pace, exceedingly heated and tired, with his clothes soiled, his shirt torn, and his sleeves and his hands alike of the colour of mud.

Horace had reason to be angry, and he was so. Arthur went that night supperless to bed, as much to poor Phemie's distress as his own, for he was so much occupied with projects about the mine that he had hardly leisure even to be hungry.

All the first part of the following day, except when engaged at meals or at study, Arthur was shut up in his own room, very busy, as Phemie divined, for she was not admitted when she knocked at the door.

"Are you going to Eshcol to day, dear Arthur?" she said, in her soft, childish voice.

"Yes." The short response sounded almost like a growl.

"I may go with you, if you do not dislike it." The silence which followed was taken for assent, but Arthur had resolved to be off quietly after his dinner, before his sister could be ready to join him. "He did not choose," he said to himself, "to be hampered with a girl in an important expedition like this!"

Arthur was busy manufacturing out of some of the broken glass which he had got from the old greenhouse something to answer the purpose of a lantern, to defend the candle from gusts of air; and he thought it all the more necessary to do this, as the day happened to be particularly windy.

Arthur's lantern, it must be confessed, was a remarkably clumsy affair; but he viewed it with that partiality which young people usually feel for the work of their own hands. He placed it in a little back parlour, that he might not suffer even the trifling delay of going up-stairs to fetch it after dinner.

Both Arthur and Phemie, from different causes, were impatient for the conclusion of the meal. Phemie felt the offering her Bible an effort—the ex-

pectation of making it weighed on her mind; she was anxious to have the interview over. Arthur counted every minute till he should be off for his mine. The plates of the children were both emptied in a short space of time, and, which was an unusual occurrence, they both declined second helps. Arthur could scarcely sit still till the meal was concluded, and the instant after the grace had been pronounced, he and his sister hurried out of the room.

Phemie ran up-stairs to prepare for her walk; Arthur dashed into the parlour to secure his lantern, and seized it with such eagerness as to occasion some little damage to the awkwardly finished piece of manufacture.

This occasioned a trifling delay, but one so brief that, under ordinary circumstances, Arthur would have quitted the house long before his sister would have descended the stairs, for Phemie was usually rather slow in her movements; but now she was in haste as well as himself, and in bonnet and shawl, with her Bible in her hand, she came down just in time to see Arthur dart through the hall door.

"Arthur! wait for me, just one moment—I'm coming, I'm coming!" she cried out, and exerted her utmost speed to overtake her brother. Arthur *neither* stopped nor looked behind him; Phemie

thought that he was in one of his teasing moods, and was only pretending not to hear in order to try her patience and her speed. Panting, breathless, half ready to cry, she continued to run and to call, always keeping her brother in sight, for the ground was open and bare. Notwithstanding all the poor girl's efforts, however, Arthur gained considerably upon her; he turned a point before he reached Eshcol gate, and was lost to view for a few minutes behind the trees which grew in Mr. Salomon's park, while, to add to Phemie's distress, a large dog came barking and snapping at her heels.

"What shall I do! oh, what shall I do!" she exclaimed, finding herself alone, and in what she deemed danger. "Oh! how cruel of Arthur to hurry on so; he might have waited just two minutes for his sister!"

Phemie looked round her in fear and distress. She was about half way between Eshcol and the Hatch, and afraid to go either forward or backward; while the dog, running in circles round her, and barking fiercely, made her dread every moment that he would fly at her throat.

She had soon, however, the relief of seeing Arthur and a companion emerging from behind the trees—not coming towards her, indeed, but hurrying off to the right in the direction of the hill above Oldshaft.

By pursuing a path which led to the same place, Phemie saw that she could join them before they had proceeded far, as she was nearer the cliff than they were, Eshcol Hall lying nearly half a mile inland. She was now too much tired to run, but, without losing sight of the boys, she walked hurriedly on, and found to her great comfort that the dog had ceased to pursue her. She came up with Arthur and Asahel just as they were beginning to mount the steep path which led to the top of the cliff.

"How on earth did you get here, Phemie?" cried Arthur, looking only half pleased at seeing her. Phemie was too breathless, and perhaps too much hurt at his conduct, to reply.

"Is this your sister?" said Asahel, slackening his pace, and approaching the little girl with the gentle courtesy which was natural to him. He held out his hand to assist her up the path; and while she timidly thanked him, wondering in her own mind at his singular grace and beauty, more striking than even the description of Arthur had led her to expect, a sudden gust of wind carried off his cap, and exposed more fully to view his fair brow, and his soft, luxuriant hair.

"Ah! my cap!" cried Asahel, springing forward in a vain attempt to save it, as the wind hurried it over the cliff.

"Come on," said Arthur, "there's no use in looking after it; it's lost to you and your heirs for ever!"

"What a pity it is!" exclaimed Phemie.

"The breeze was teaching me a lesson in politeness," laughed Asahel, putting up his hand to prevent his locks from being blown over his face; "it makes me uncover in the presence of a little lady."

"Where are we going?" said Phemie to Asahel, as, following Arthur, they now commenced scrambling up the hill.

"Arthur believes that he has discovered an opening into the mine, so we are about to explore it; and as we cannot find treasures, any more than happiness, without some degree of light, I have brought two wax tapers along with me," replied the young Jew with a smile.

"But is it not dangerous?" asked Phemie anxiously.

"We are only going a little way in, I suppose—just far enough to see if Arthur is really right in his conjecture. And I have read that as long as a taper burns clearly in a mine, a human being may tread there without peril."

"This is the spot; make haste!" cried Arthur, who was in advance; "quick, give me the taper, Asahel; I must fix it into my lantern. There—and the box of matches."

"This is indeed a complete hiding-place," exclaimed Asahel. "I should never have dreamed that an opening was here. Perhaps this was used as a place of concealment for the old Cavaliers; or the Lollards hid here from their foes, perhaps—"

"I wish that you would move a little aside," said Arthur, abruptly, "and let me light the taper in the hole; here the wind blows out all the matches as fast as I can light them."

Arthur crept into the hole, and lighted his lantern, Asahel holding back the furze-bush to facilitate his entrance.

"Are you going in?" said Asahel to Phemie.

"I don't know—I think I would rather not—it's so small—"

"Small! you absurd little creature!" cried Arthur from within; "if I can get in, don't you think there is room for a tiny button like you?"

Phemie's indecision was ended at once by the sharp bark of a dog approaching towards them. If she was afraid of following Arthur, she was a great deal more afraid of facing her tormentor without him; she was terrified at the idea of being left alone, so, gathering her dress close around her, she made her way through the narrow opening, closely followed by Asahel da Costa.

CHAPTER XI.

DOWN IN THE MINE.

"A STRANGE sort of place this!" exclaimed the young Jew; "marvellously like a grave!" and his dream recurred to his mind.

"It is much wider a little further on," said Arthur, moving downwards into the hill.

"I can't see the light which you carry," cried Asahel, as he groped his way in the dark.

"That is because we block up the path so," answered Arthur; "my lantern burns clear and bright."

"How strange your voice sounds!" murmured Phemie, half wishing now to return; but as it would have been impossible for her to have done so without making Asahel go back first, for there was no room for her to pass him, she did not like to make the proposal. She had a distressing sensation

of suffocation. Arthur being before and Asahel behind her, prevented much air from reaching the little girl either from the entrance or the interior of the mine, and she was beginning to think that she could endure it no longer, when the party emerged into a much wider part. This was, indeed, one of the lodes or fissures in the earth, along which in former days the miners had explored for the mineral treasures of the place.

"We are in the mine, there's not a doubt of it!" exclaimed Arthur, with an air of triumph; "see what I've found—relics of the years that are past!" And Asahel and Phemie pressed to his side to examine with great interest, by the taper's feeble light, not a heap of rich ore or of shining metal, but an old shoe and the broken handle of a hammer.

"Proof positive that men have been here," cried Asahel; "gnomes neither wear shoes nor wield carpenters' tools!"

"And now," said Phemie, timidly, "suppose that we go back."

"Go back!" cried Arthur, indignantly; "no one but a cowardly girl would ever think of such a thing! I want to see if there's no glitter of metal upon these dark walls;" and he held up his clumsy lantern. The sides of the passage were somewhat irregular, bearing token that it had been the work

of nature, and not of man—a fissure through which water had probably once forced its way. The walls were coated over with a hard, crystalline, earthy substance, but Arthur was at first unable to detect the slightest appearance of tin.

He walked on, closely followed by the others. The passage sometimes dipped downwards at a pretty steep decline, then again appeared almost level, while various paths, like wide cracks in the hill, branched off in different directions.

"I dare not go on; we shall be lost!" exclaimed Phemie.

"We shall soon turn," replied Asahel; "my leave extends but to one hour. But is there not something wildly romantic in thus wandering through the depths of the earth, knowing that grass is waving high high above us, and perhaps little feet treading over our heads!"

Phemie looked more uneasy than delighted at the thought. She heartily wished that she had not followed Arthur from the Hatch, especially as it did not appear probable that the conversation would take such a turn as might enable her to offer her Bible.

Asahel was as eager as Arthur in exploring the lode. Not that he was in search of riches, or would have cared greatly had he found them, but the strange silence and darkness of the place, the

long black shadows cast by the solitary taper, the romance of exploring unknown depths, acted powerfully upon his imagination.

"So here we are, like philosophers, fairly started on the search after happiness," he cried. "You, Arthur, carrying the lantern of reason—"

"It gives very little light here," said Phemie.

"And casts tremendous shadows," rejoined Asahel; "but its gleam would suffice to show us metal were there any to discover. But perhaps we shall find the treasure in a different shape from what we expect. Look at those odd-shaped little lumps in the wall, Arthur, of a sort of nondescript colour, steel gray, with a dash of brass yellow; I should not wonder if they had something to do with the metal we are hunting for here."

Arthur raised the handle of the hammer, and broke off one of the lumps. It was brittle, and not like stone; at the part where it had been broken it glittered with metallic lustre.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" exclaimed Arthur, "there is metal! I should not wonder if it turned out to be silver! Come on; come on quickly; I see more of it! Oh, Phemie! I wish I'd your bag to hold these curious specimens!"

"I don't know what has become of my bag."

"Oh! I left it somewhere: I don't remember the

place," said Arthur, applying his hammer to the wall with a vigour which made the gloomy place resound through all its depths.

"We must make our further researches to-morrow," said Asahel; "I'm on honour, and it is time to return."

"Wait a minute, will you?" cried Arthur, who had lighted upon a larger piece of the ore, which obstinately refused to yield to his blows. He put his lantern down on the ground, and grasping the hammer handle with both hands, gave so sturdy a stroke that he broke off the lump, but staggered forward himself with the impetus of the blow, and stumbled over the lantern!

In a moment utter darkness enveloped the place! Phemie uttered a faint "Oh!" and Arthur an impatient exclamation.

"We can easily light it again," said Asahel.

"True; give me the match-box quickly."

"The match-box! why, you have it yourself."

Arthur hurriedly fumbled in his pockets, emptied them, and then exclaimed that Asahel had brought it, and must have it.

"I gave it to you when you lighted the taper," said Asahel—Phemie turned very cold.

"Well it is clear that I have it not," cried Arthur, after another fruitless search. "We had better

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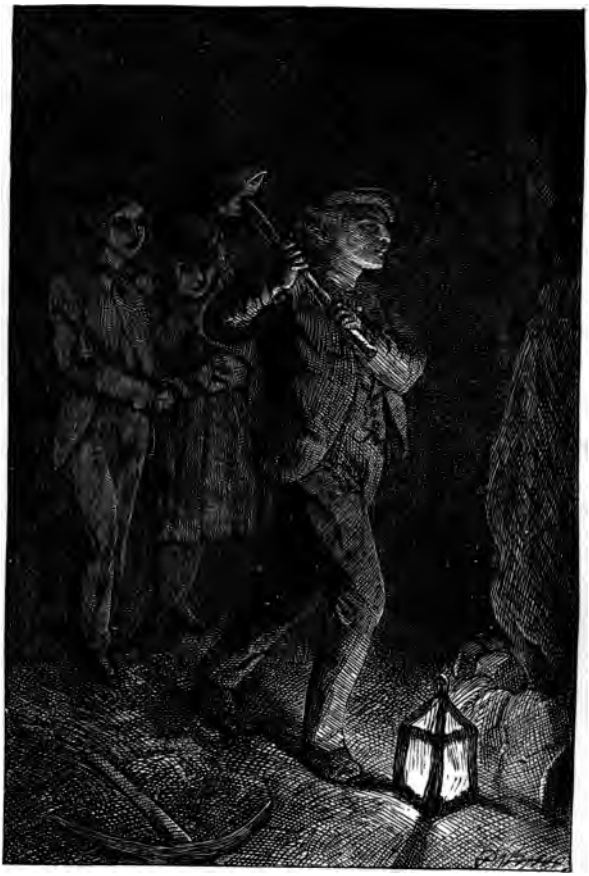

IN THE MINE.

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He felt for Phemie, and took her little icy hand within his own. Judging from her height and appearance, he thought her quite a young child, and his gentle heart amid its own oppressive fears had room for compassion for his poor little companion.

Fearful, indeed, was that hour, when the three unhappy wanderers, groping in the awful darkness, vainly tried to find their way back to freedom and sunshine! Often did they pause to feel if any gust of fresher air on their faces betokened that they were near the opening on the hill; but no, the air was close, heavy, and oppressive, whichever way they turned! Then Arthur made passionate efforts to strike a spark from two stones. After bruising his hand very severely, he succeeded in striking one or two, and Phemie uttered an exclamation of joy; but it was impossible to light the taper at them—the feeble sparks died away in the darkness, like the hopes of the miserable three!

"Our long absence will alarm our friends," said Asahel. "They will search for us in every place."

"Except this—every place except this!" exclaimed Arthur, in a thrilling tone of despair. "Our fate will be that of the lady who hid in the oaken chest—only our bodies will *never* be found!" and he threw himself down on the ground, exhausted with his fruitless efforts.

"If we were to cry out, very loud indeed," murmured poor Phemie, "don't you think that some one might hear us?"

Her suggestion was instantly adopted. Again and again rose a cry—a wild cry of distress from these depths, echoed back by a strange, hollow sound, which died away into silence again!

The wanderers had done all that they could, and all had been done in vain! Passage after passage had been tried, till their memory had become confused, their strength worn out, and they all at last sat down in despair, the dreary conviction chilling the heart of each that they would never see daylight again, that they would perish of want in these dreary caves, where no one would think of searching for them!

CHAPTER XII.

THE TREASURE FOUND.

HAT was a time of awful trial! As it was the sharp blow which discovered the hidden metal, so was it now the heavy stroke of affliction which proved the spirit of the sufferers. The horror of darkness, the pang of hunger, the fear of death, had fallen upon all; but the weight of that fear lay with very unequal power on the hearts of the three. It was strange that the most timid of the party had now the least to endure from terror!

Arthur and Asahel both felt intensely wretched as death suddenly stared them in the face. They would both have dared far more than Phemie; they would more cheerfully have rushed into danger, as long as there was excitement to rouse them or hope to support. The desire of distinguishing himself would have incited Arthur to gallant deeds; a ro-

mantic spirit of heroism would have impelled his companion. But here there was no voice of fame to rouse with its trumpet-call; nothing to awake enthusiasm or call for exertion: there was but the prospect of lingering sufferings, which no one would ever hear of—sufferings only to be closed by death. And death was terrible to both the youths, though from very different causes: to Arthur,. because he had scarcely ever thought of it; to Asahel, because he had thought of it so much. To Arthur it now appeared as the sudden cutting short of every hope and enjoyment, a quenching of the light of life, a horrible blank—something resembling the darkness around him. Asahel had a keener sense of fear, for his imagination peopled that darkness with forms of terror: it was not death itself so much as the hereafter that he dreaded; he could have suffered much, and with constancy, had he felt assured that he had nothing to fear beyond the grave. Arthur thought most of his present misery, Asahel of that which might yet be to come.

But Phemie had been taught from her earliest childhood to connect the idea of death so closely with that of heaven, that they were inseparably connected in her mind. Death was to her the gate of the everlasting temple, the angel-messenger of the great King—the river on whose farther bank lay the

paradise of God. Such were the images familiar to the child. Phemie was afraid of suffering—as who is not? She was afraid of sorrow, and hunger, and pain; she was not afraid of that which would put an end to them all. She had a Father and Friend in the distant land, and her thoughts had so often wandered thither, that she could not arrive as a stranger. While her companions were struggling in a sea of anguish, she was clinging to an immovable Rock; in the midst of the fearful gloom she felt a Father's sustaining hand; there was light to her in the darkness, and even in trouble a secret peace.

"It must be late, very late!" exclaimed Arthur, after a long gloomy silence; "I think that we must have spent a whole night here! It is endless night in this horrible place!"

Asahel drew out his watch and raised it to his ear. "It is still going," he said, "and it has not been wound up since last night. It cannot be midnight yet."

'Shall we pray together, and then try to sleep!" said Phemie, in a low faint voice.

"I could not sleep here," murmured Asahel, "and I am afraid to pray."

"Afraid!" repeated Phemie, very gently; "oh! prayer is the only thing that can make us not afraid."

mantic spirit of heroism would have impelled his companion. But here there was no voice of fame to rouse with its trumpet-call; nothing to awake enthusiasm or call for exertion: there was but the prospect of lingering sufferings, which no one would ever hear of—sufferings only to be closed by death. And death was terrible to both the youths, though from very different causes: to Arthur, because he had scarcely ever thought of it; to Asahel, because he had thought of it so much. To Arthur it now appeared as the sudden cutting short of every hope and enjoyment, a quenching of the light of life, a horrible blank—something resembling the darkness around him. Asahel had a keener sense of fear, for his imagination peopled that darkness with forms of terror: it was not death itself so much as the hereafter that he dreaded; he could have suffered much, and with constancy, had he felt assured that he had nothing to fear beyond the grave. Arthur thought most of his present misery, Asahel of that which might yet be to come.

But Phemie had been taught from her earliest childhood to connect the idea of death so closely with that of heaven, that they were inseparably connected in her mind. Death was to her the gate of the everlasting temple, the angel-messenger of the great King—the river on whose farther bank lay the

paradise of God. Such were the images familiar to the child. Phemie was afraid of suffering—as who is not? She was afraid of sorrow, and hunger, and pain; she was not afraid of that which would put an end to them all. She had a Father and Friend in the distant land, and her thoughts had so often wandered thither, that she could not arrive as a stranger. While her companions were struggling in a sea of anguish, she was clinging to an immovable Rock; in the midst of the fearful gloom she felt a Father's sustaining hand; there was light to her in the darkness, and even in trouble a secret peace.

"It must be late, very late!" exclaimed Arthur, after a long gloomy silence; "I think that we must have spent a whole night here! It is endless night in this horrible place!"

Asahel drew out his watch and raised it to his ear. "It is still going," he said, "and it has not been wound up since last night. It cannot be midnight yet."

'Shall we pray together, and then try to sleep!" said Phemie, in a low faint voice.

"I could not sleep here," murmured Asahel, "and I am afraid to pray."

"Afraid!" repeated Phemie, very gently; "oh! prayer is the only thing that can make us not afraid."

"Are you not afraid, Phemie?" said Asahel.

The little girl waited a brief space before she replied, "Yes, I am afraid; but when I lift up my heart to the Saviour, he comforts me."

"Do you believe," said Asahel very solemnly, "that he—he who suffered at Calvary lives yet, and can hear you when you pray?"

Phemie clasped her hands and replied, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*"

Asahel was struck at the child's answer, being given in the words of Job—words upon which he had often pondered with solemn inquiry. It was a little time before he broke silence. "And you believe that your prayer can reach him?"

"He is beside us now," whispered Phemie; "darkness cannot hide us from his eye, and death can only bring us nearer to him."

"If I could but think that!" exclaimed Asahel; "oh, Phemie, if I could but share your hope!"

"You would—you would, if you could but read my Bible!" exclaimed Phemie; "I have it with me—but all is darkness! Oh, if we could but light the lantern!"

"We would then find our way to safety," cried Arthur, who, having fallen half asleep, had only heard her concluding words.

"To safety!—yes, safety for the soul!" murmured

Asahel. "Here darkness is around me indeed! And yet," he added, with more animation, "there seems a little gleam of light when I remember the strange dream which I had, and which the horrors of this place bring now more strongly to my mind!"

"Tell us your dream," said Arthur, rousing himself to listen, anxious to share any "gleam of light" that could shine on the darkness of the mine. He was lying full length, with his face towards the ground, his brow supported by his arm. The proud heart of the impetuous boy was humbled by the painful consciousness that it was he who had brought his companions into their perilous condition, and his better feelings were touched by their generosity in never uttering to him one word of reproach.

Asahel repeated his dream, and felt his own heart kindle as he did so. He seemed to hear again the angel voice that breathed the words, "Free forgiveness,"—to gaze again upon the bleeding hand, and the pardon signed in blood. It was no longer to him like a dream; it was the shadow of a living Truth—a vision of the world unseen!

The tears flowed down the pale cheeks of Phemie as she listened to the glowing words of the young Jew; and when he had concluded, she exclaimed, "Oh, Asahel, why not do that now which you did

in your dream—fall down at the feet of your Deliverer, and cry, 'My Lord, and my Saviour?'"

"Would he not reject me?" said Asahel.

"Oh no! never, never!" cried Phemie. "He never rejects any who turn unto him. We may come in our darkness, we may come in our sin—the blessed Lord has mercy for all!"

"But I am so ignorant—so dark!" exclaimed Asahel; "my heart believes, but my mind lacks knowledge. I have been brought up amongst those who do not accept your gospel. Where could I find proofs that your Lord is the Messiah?"

"In the Old Testament—in your own Scriptures!" cried Phemie, eagerly; "from the beginning to the end, they bear witness to him." And then, with a rapidity and fluency which seemed strange even to herself, carefully as she had thought over the subject before, she brought forward some of the principal prophecies and types, such as even a child may be made to comprehend. As she spoke of the ark, the paschal lamb, the brazen serpent, Isaac bound on the altar, and the wondrous prophecies contained in Isaiah and the Psalms, her soft childish voice, in its earnest utterance, fell with more power on the mind of her listener than manly eloquence could have done; for it seemed to the awe-struck Jew as though Heaven were inspiring a little child to bear

its life-giving message to one on the brink of the grave!

Asahel's own knowledge of the Psalms and the Prophets was invaluable to him now. Passage after passage flashed on his mind without being suggested by Phemie; and in the intense interest with which he pursued the absorbing theme, for a short space the sufferings and perils of his position appeared almost forgotten. When the young speaker's silvery voice ceased, a low sob burst from the very heart of the Jew

"Oh, Phemie, I must—I do believe! Like the poor wretch on the cross, I turn to the Saviour at my dying hour. He is my last, my only hope: may he be merciful to me, a sinner!"

"And to me!" murmured Arthur, almost inaudibly. Never had religion seemed to him a thing so solemn, so real, as it did now. It is with a very different amount of interest that we look on a life-boat hauled in on shore when the sea is smooth and the winds are still, to that with which we behold it dashing through the breakers to our rescue—when we stand on a vessel enveloped in flame, or sinking in the depths of the ocean. There was nothing but religion now which could afford a ray of comfort to the lost children.

"Oh, Arthur," cried Asahel, sadly, overhearing

the low exclamation of his friend, "your position is so different from mine—you have always been a Christian."

"I do not believe that I ever was a Christian," exclaimed Arthur; "I never cared much for these things. I never did one single act—never gave up one single fault—because I knew that as a Christian I ought to do so. I am less fit to die, Asahel, than you. You had love without knowledge; I knowledge without love. Yours was ignorance—mine was sin!"

Yes, Arthur's religion had been like the taper which he carried with him now. There had been the *form* of what was most needed; but what was the form without the *light?* As he was now in danger of perishing, even with the taper in his hand, so what will it avail us to have been baptized and brought up as Christians, wanting the spark of heavenly love!

That spark was kindled in the bosom of Asahel; by it he had found in that awful hour—in that gloomy mine he had discovered the treasure beyond all price—the hope of bliss unchanging and eternal, bought with a price which worlds could not have paid.

Again Phemie suggested, "Shall we pray?" They knelt down together in that dark living tomb

—that valley of the shadow of death; and Asahel, leading the devotions of his companions, poured out his soul in prayer to the Lord Jesus, the Redeemer of the world. A sweet feeling of peace, of humble confidence, came over the spirit of the youth—a feeling like that which he had experienced in his dream. He was willing to resign his life to that merciful Being whom, not having seen, he had yet loved; and long after the prayer was ended Asahel lay meditating on the wonders of redemption, while Arthur restlessly made yet another attempt to find the entrance to the mine; and Phemie, completely worn out, lay peacefully slumbering on the hard rocky floor.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GLANCE AT THE PAST.

AND how had the time sped at Moorcroft Hatch during the long absence of the wanderers?

Horace awaited the return of his nephew to his studies; and when one hour passed, and then another, the non-appearance of the truant excited a strong feeling of displeasure in the mind of Mr. Moorcroft, but not at first mingled with any alarm. As it was not the first nor the second occasion on which Arthur had thus trespassed on the patience of his uncle, Horace was not yet uneasy as to the cause of the boy's prolonged absence. But he revolved in his mind what strong measures should be taken to prevent a recurrence of the offence, and seriously considered whether it might not be advisable to send his wilful charge back to school.

It was simply a principle of economy which prevented Mr. Moorcroft from deciding upon a measure which would have relieved him from a disagreeable responsibility and a wearisome burden. Horace had resolved not to touch a shilling of the pension to which Arthur was entitled for the services of his father till the youth should be old enough to be sent to college, when the accumulated sum would scarcely suffice to finish his education, and to set him out in life. Purely unselfish were the motives of the uncle in himself undertaking the drudgery of a tutor.

But there was another cause of the rigid economy which excluded from the household of the gloomy old Hatch all the luxuries, and some even of the comforts of life. Horace was not laying by treasure; he was not hoarding up his money, as Arthur had supposed; he was merely paying a debt to his conscience. He had entered life with the high resolves of a strong and generous nature, that had received a careful, though perhaps too rigid and exclusive a training. The world had been an untried battle-field to Horace, who had been educated entirely at home; he had entered it fearlessly, confiding in his own strength and the power of his good resolutions. One of the latter, which the youth had even bound himself to keep by a secret vow, was to devote one-tenth of all that he should ever possess to religious

and charitable purposes. The vow had been hastily made, and it had been wilfully broken. Horace had fallen into the snares which he feared not—had yielded to unexpected temptations. From the day when, a stripling of sixteen, he had first set foot in India, he had never laid by the devoted sum; nay more, he had soon plunged into debt. Twice the generosity of his brother had freed him from painful embarrassments, and twice had recurring temptations induced Horace to violate the obligations of gratitude and duty. Tied down by debt, treading the downward path which afforded so sad a contrast to the straight course of virtue and honour on which, in his youth, he had set out, there seemed little probability that Horace would ever be able to return to his native country, though his health required the change, and a visit to England might afford him a chance of breaking free from the fatal habit to which he had yielded.

Again Arthur's generous father interposed, and, by sacrificing the greater portion of the little savings which he had intended to settle on his own children, enabled his brother to accompany him on his homeward voyage. This liberality was the more remarkable, as the mother of the Moorcrofts had bequeathed to Horace, though the younger of her sons, the estate, of some extent though of little

value, which she possessed in Cornwall, and in which the tin mine was situated. This display of partiality towards her favourite had been as unwise as it appeared unjust; the small receipts which Horace had derived from his property had been swallowed up like the rest of his income. But for the generous spirit of the elder Arthur, more fatal effects might have ensued; jealousy might have severed the tie between the brothers, and Horace have been left without a friend.

But Arthur never suffered himself even in thought to question the wisdom of a parent, nor did he ever relax in his efforts to reclaim her erring son. He strongly opposed his brother's intention of clearing himself from debt by selling the family estate, which could only have been done at great disadvantage. He preferred draining his own purse to assist Horace; and if the younger Moorcroft permitted the generous sacrifice, it was because he made a mental resolve that the land should descend to his brother's heir, and that at any rate after his own death the injustice to Arthur should be repaired.

Horace's gratitude was deep, though silent. His love for his elder brother was one of the strongest passions of his nature, and to do service to his benefactor he would readily have sacrificed his life. But, alas! it is often a harder task to give up one beset-

ting sin, than to face danger and death! It would be difficult to say whether even the generous affection and the earnest counsels of Arthur Moorcroft would have availed to effect any lasting change in the habits of his unhappy brother; but the crushing blow, the almost maddening grief, occasioned by his sudden loss, had accomplished more than all the efforts of his self-denying life. Weighed down to the dust by misery and remorse, Horace had learned the painful lesson of repentance, and turned at length from his besetting sin with unutterable hatred and abhorrence. The wretched man only endured life for the means which it might afford of repairing in some measure the wrong which he had done to his brother. He would deny himself in all things, and restore to the children every farthing of what he had owed to the father. He would now also keep his broken but unforgotten vow to Heaven, and devote to the poor a tenth of the substance which God had given to one so unworthy. Horace made a careful calculation of all the pay that he had ever received, and of the trifling rent which he had derived from the Hatch, and counted the tenth of it as a sacred debt which it should be the business of his life to repay. Secret remittances were made by him to various charities in India, and many a good work at home was helped by his anonymous

contributions. Horace, under any circumstances, would have hated ostentation, but it would now have only filled him with shame had he suffered men to esteem him generous, when he felt that he was only struggling to be just. No being on earth did he permit to know what he did with his money. Horace cared little for the opinion of the world; or, if the imputation of meanness ever caused him pain, he took that pain as a just punishment for the errors of his earlier days. No one could have judged Horace Moorcroft more hardly than he judged himself; he was thought proud while he was deeply humble, and counted himself unworthy of the smallest mercies of Heaven. He was considered cold and hard, and perhaps in one way he was so; but his was not the hardness of the unyielding granite, but rather that of the waves which have congealed beneath the icy grasp of winter—waters which once heaved restlessly under the influence of wind and tide, and which yet might melt and sparkle under the beams of a brighter sun!

Horace Moorcroft sat alone, with folded arms and eyes sternly bent upon the floor. His thoughts had wandered from the subject of Arthur, his wilfulness, and the means of subduing it, to the one gloomy theme to which, sleeping or waking, his mind would instinctively recur. Horace was thinking of his lost

brother. Time seemed to have no power to soften his grief, to close up the ever-bleeding wound, for self-reproach and remorse had poisoned it, and though Horace trusted that he had been forgiven, himself he could never forgive. Lost in his gloomy recollections, he had completely forgotten for the moment that several hours had now elapsed since Arthur had left his home, when he was startled by a knock at the door, more loud and impatient than any to which the old timbers of the Hatch had resounded for many a year. As the thundering summons was not instantly obeyed, it was repeated; and Horace, anxious to ascertain the cause of the evident impatience of his unexpected visitor, hastily walked into the hall as his maid-servant opened the door, and met Mr. Salomons at the threshold.

The old man looked flushed and excited, and his eyes had a restless uneasy expression. He scarcely returned the courteous greeting of Mr. Moorcroft, to whom he was slightly known through matters of business, though they had not as yet exchanged visits; and he at once proceeded to the cause of his coming.

"Is Asahel—is my grandson at your house?" asked the old man. The question was abrupt almost to rudeness; it was of course answered in the negative.

"Has your nephew come home?"

"No," replied Horace; "the boy has played truant to-day."

"Truant!" exclaimed Mr. Salomons bitterly; "he has taken my grandson I know not where. Would that I had forbidden Asahel to have anything to say to him!"

Horace Moorcroft was annoyed, but scarcely yet alarmed. He turned quickly to his servant, who was lingering in the hall, and asked her if she knew anything of the movements of his nephew.

The maid crumpled the corner of her apron. Both Mrs. Vesey and herself had been wondering all the afternoon, said the girl, at what had become of Master Arthur and Miss Phemie.

"Phemie!" exclaimed Moorcroft, the blood rushing to his brow. He had not missed his little niece, for she was seldom beside him at that part of the day; but to hear that she had been absent so long awakened in a moment anxiety and alarm for the safety of both of his charges. Horace knew that Phemie's strength would not carry her far, while her character for steadiness and obedience made it exceedingly improbable that she would willingly have played truant from her home. It was, therefore, with an expression as anxious as that of his visitor that Mr. Moorcroft took his hat down from its peg,

and said, "I will walk over to Oldshaft and make inquiries."

"A servant of mine has been at Oldshaft already," said the Jew, "and others in various directions; the country for miles round has been searched. No one has seen anything of either of the boys since they started from Eshcol at two o'clock. I came here as a last resource!"

The face of Horace turned deadly pale, but his manner was strangely calm, and his voice quiet, as he said, "Have you tried the beach below the east cliff?"

The old man visibly trembled. "It has been high-water there—they could not—" He did not conclude his sentence.

Mr. Moorcroft drew out his watch and looked at it. "The tide has been on the turn for the last hour," said he; "shall we walk to the beach together?"

No one that saw his cold quiet demeanour, as he quitted the house with his excited companion, would have guessed what a weight of agonizing fear lay like a mountain on his breast!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SECRET GRIEF.

IT was not long before the two gentlemen had skirted the shore of the bay, and reached the shingle below the cliff. Horace walked so fast that his companion could scarcely keep up with his long rapid strides. Mr. Salomons spoke almost incessantly—talked of Asahel's constitutional delicacy, the deaths of the other members of his family, the care which had from infancy been taken of the boy: it was doubtful whether Horace heard his companion or not, for he never answered a word.

The sun was now verging towards the western horizon. Large masses of crimson clouds floated in the sky, and their reflection on the waves below gave the waters the appearance of a sea of glory. Even close to the cliff the shingle was still wet and shining from the effects of the recent high tide, and

the feet of the gentlemen, as they hastily pursued their way, sometimes broke the bright bubbles on the foam-flakes which marked the height to which the last billow had reached. There was no human being in sight, save in a boat which was passing near, the measured dip of whose glancing oars reached the ears of the searchers on the shore.

Horace's quick eye was attracted by some small black object which lay on the beach at a little distance. In a few moments he was bending with an interest amounting to agony over a simple cotton work-bag, the long strings of which had become entangled around a large stone, and which had thus been preserved from being swept off by the waves, though its wet state proved that they must have passed over it. Many a time had Horace seen that bag on the arm of his little niece, and any doubt of its identity that he might possibly have entertained was at once destroyed by the initials which he beheld marked upon the border. His lip quivered, but he could not speak; he gazed on the relics with dry, tearless eyes, which wore the expression of something more terrible than mere apprehension. He did not even hear the voice of the old Jew beside him, who was eagerly and loudly shouting across the water to the boatmen, to draw their at-

tention to some floating object which the waves were bearing farther and farther from the shore.

"There!—there!" cried Mr. Salomons, pointing nervously, as one of the men, stretching forward with his oar, first touched the object, and then lifted it on high, and shook the sea-water from it; "what is it?—my eyes are dim and dazzled—what is it?" he repeated in a sharper tone, pressing Moorcroft's arm with a convulsive grasp, which at length enforced attention.

"A light horse-hair cap with a band of blue velvet."

The old man uttered a terrible cry, and raised both his arms with a gesture of despair. "It is Asahel's!—my boy!—my child! he is lost!" he exclaimed; "he is lost!"

"All are lost!" murmured Horace, and closed his eyes, as if to shut out some scene of horror.

Yet even at that moment of anguish he still clung to hope—the desperate hope that the bodies of the children might be recovered; that perhaps even life might be restored. It was this desperate hope that made him hail the boat, and embark in it, accompanied by the miserable old man, who clung to him for support and guidance under a calamity that almost unsettled his judgment. It was that desperate hope which made Horace Moor-

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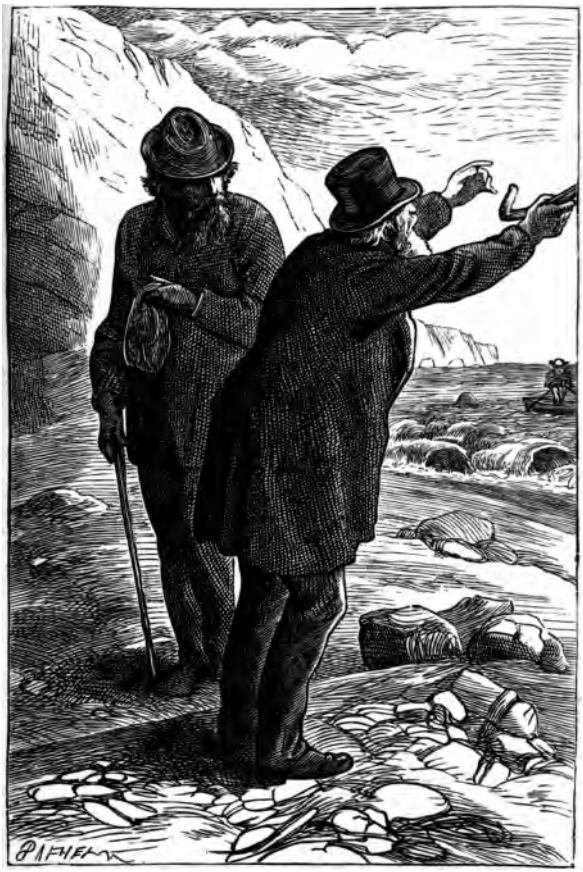

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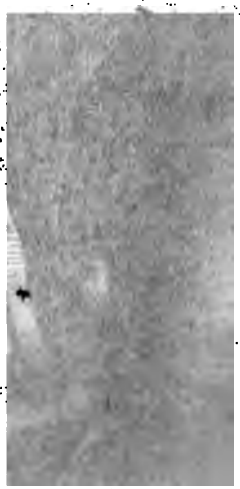
croft, for hours, search the sea and the shore, while the golden beams of sunset gave place to twilight, and long after the gathering darkness had been dispelled by the soft rays of the moon. Even till midnight the two bereaved companions pursued their miserable search, which became every minute more hopeless; but at length, with a feeling of despair, Horace gave the command to put into the shore. As the dripping oars were lifted from the water, and the boat's keel grated on the shingle, Horace sprang once more on the beach with a sense of utter desolation on his soul. He could help the old man out of the boat, gently, compassionately, as though anguish had left room for pity—he had sufficient composure to reward those who had toiled in his service—he gave way to no loud burst of distress; but there was something fearful in his silent grief as he led his companion up the shore.

The sorrow of the miserable old grandfather vented itself in passionate upbraidings; he accused himself, Arthur, Asahel, all the world; spoke long and loudly, with vehement gestures, careless how deep he might be forcing down the barbed dart which was rankling in the bosom of the man whose arm was at that moment his support. The selfish heart of Mr. Salomons was scarcely capable of tender, self-denying affection. Asahel had been precious to



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him, indeed, but rather as the only scion of his house, the object of his pride, the heir of his wealth, than as the subject of deep paternal love; but the suddenness of the blow which had bereft him of his boy had awakened all the latent feeling which covetousness and worldliness had left—he mourned for Asahel as one without hope, for to the consolations of religion the unhappy old man was a stranger.

It was not till Horace Moorcroft had seen Mr. Salomons safe at Eshcol, and had heard from the servants of the Jew their accounts of prolonged and fruitless searches in various directions, that he returned to his own desolate home. Drearier than ever it looked, in the cold pale moonlight—the shadows more intensely black; but all was shadow on the spirit of Horace.

He found Mrs. Vesey watching at the door. She was almost afraid to question him, he looked so ghastly and ill; but in a few brief words he told her the worst, and then went slowly up to his own room—not to sleep, not to rest! Horace threw himself down on a chair, pressed his hand tightly over his aching brow, and a faint groan burst from his lips, as if wrung forth by uncontrollable pain. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "God's judgment is heavy on me still! I am not yet forgiven the death of my brother!"

These words startled the old housekeeper, who had just softly opened the door to offer some refreshment to her master after his long night expedition. She noiselessly closed it again, and retired shocked and terrified from the presence of one who could utter a sentence which seemed to convey so dark and dreadful a meaning.

"The death of his brother! not forgiven the death of his brother!" she repeated to herself, as with trembling knees she ascended to her attic, and paused sadly at the open door of poor Arthur's empty room. "I have heard that Mr. Moorcroft's death was sudden, but I never heard—I never dreamed that his brother was any ways in fault! Mercy on us! what a world it is that we live in! Surely his brain was wandering when he said it! he has had sorrow enough this night to drive him out of his senses!"

But the mind of Horace had not been wandering, nor had his thoughts been confused when he uttered those words of anguish. Memory was but too faithfully bringing before him a scene of which the events of that miserable night seemed a fearful repetition. It was not the first time that Horace Moorcroft had trodden a sea-washed beach at the dark hour of midnight, seeking, and seeking in vain, for the corpse of one whom he loved. In order to

understand why his grief assumed the character of such deep self-reproach, it is necessary to enter more particularly than we have hitherto done into the circumstances attending the loss of his brother.

My readers may have already divined that the besetting sin which had exercised such fatal influence over Horace was that of gambling, that vice which has plunged thousands and thousands into misery and ruin. It may be supposed that gratitude towards his brother and benefactor, joined to his own bitter experience, would have sufficed to have induced Horace to abandon this habit for ever; but, alas! it has been too often found how difficult, how next to impossible, it is to break from the bondage of this vice, when once it has taken full possession of the soul! Horace had resolved to play no more, never to make another bet; but he stood by the tables and watched the cards, and the result was such as might have been foreseen.

In the steamer which conveyed the travellers from Alexandria, a Sicilian nobleman had taken his passage, and the society of the Conte di Novelli soon exercised a dangerous influence over Horace. The count was an inveterate gambler, but possessed the insinuating address, polished manner, and cultivated mind, which make a man welcome in the highest circles. He appeared particularly to attach

himself to Horace, who, on his part, was attracted by the fascination of his conversation.

During the rough weather which it encountered in the Mediterranean, the steamer had to put in for repairs at a Sicilian port. This was a source of annoyance to the English passengers, who were impatient to reach their own country; but was very convenient to the count, who was landed but a few miles from his home. He invited Horace, with many professions of friendship, to pass the time of the vessel's detention with him in his villa di campagna; but this invitation was courteously declined. He then urged Horace to join a "re-union" of his friends at a little party which the count proposed to give two days after his landing.

The elder Moorcroft, who had seen enough of Novelli to guess what the character of the meeting would be, and who disliked, for various reasons, the idea of his brother mixing in Sicilian society, dissuaded him strongly from going. Arthur joined a party to visit Syracuse, persuaded that Horace had given up all intention of passing the night at the villa di Novelli. But a few thoughtless words from a lady, who commended the prudence of Horace in not venturing to traverse the roads of a country which was then in a state of political disturbance, where armed insurgents, or insolent soldiery, might

render travelling after dark quite dangerous, had an effect on the sensitive spirit of Horace exactly opposite to that intended. He saw that it was possible that his refusal to go might be attributed to fear! Novelli perceived his advantage, and pressed it, and left the steamer with a promise from Horace that he would set out to join him soon after sunset.

"Take the path along the cliff, and you cannot miss your way," said the count as he parted from Horace; "I well know that courage is inherent in Englishmen, but it might be as well, amico mio, in the present state of our distracted country, to carry with you some weapon of defence."

"I shall carry a stout cudgel, that is enough. I do not believe that there is anything to fear."

Horace was habitually a temperate man, but that day he was less so than usual. He knew that he was about to do a foolish thing, and it was with him as it is with all of us, one wrong step leads to another. Horace set out on his night walk a little flushed and heated with wine, and his mind not quite so clear and composed as it was wont to be. He was constitutionally courageous, and cared very little for danger; but as he pursued his dark solitary path, the various warnings which he had received recurred to his memory. They were enforced by a low whistle from the beach, which suddenly

broke the stillness, and which sounded to his ear like a signal. Horace grasped his cudgel more firmly, and smiled as he thought of the effect of one good blow from an English arm, contrasting it with the use of the stiletto, a weapon fit only for banditti and assassins.

The path just before him was narrow, a precipice rose on his right, on his left he could hear the moan of the surges below; a cloud had passed over the moon—there was scarcely enough of light to guide him on his way. "This would be a perilous spot," thought Horace, "for a hand-to-hand encounter; a struggle upon this narrow ledge would try of what metal a man was made." He stopped suddenly, for at that moment he fancied that he heard a quick step behind him. Before he had time to look round, a hand was laid on his shoulder! Horace turned sharply, and with the sense of danger quickening his movements and giving force to his arm, he struck his supposed assailant one desperate blow—but one, but it was sufficient to send him reeling over the edge of the cliff! Horror of horrors! in the cry of the perishing man, as he lost his footing and plunged over into the abyss—that cry which was the utterance of the name of "Horace!"—that cry which for days and nights rung in the ears of him who had dealt the fatal blow, Moorcroft recognized the voice of his brother!

From that hour of unutterable horror Horace became a changed man. No one but himself knew the fearful circumstances attending his bereavement, but every one saw that its effects had crushed him to the dust. The impatient, fiery, high-spirited officer had become a broken-hearted man. It was true that Horace knew his brother's death to have been the result of a mistake—that it might be regarded as an unhappy accident—that he himself was guiltless of even a thought of injuring one so beloved: but Horace also felt that Arthur had died in a last attempt to draw him back from the path of ruin—that he had been the victim of his fraternal affection; and that had he been less generous, less devoted, he might yet have lived to return to his country and his children.

Horace had repented in the sight of Heaven, but the consequences of his errors pursued him on earth. The record of his sins might be blotted out on high, but in his own heart they were written in letters of fire. Could we see the fearful results of our transgressions on our happiness below—could we see spread before us all the miseries into which the indulgence of one evil habit may lead us—how we would shrink back and tremble at the view, and own that even in what regards this life alone, "*the way of transgressors is hard!*"

CHAPTER XV.

ONE EFFORT MORE.

BUT we have too long wandered from the youthful sufferers whom we left to spend the lingering hours of night in the dark recesses of the mine.

Sleep came to them all at last, and for a brief space soothed them into forgetfulness of danger. Phemie was the first to awake. She did so with a strange feeling of oppression on her heart, though she could not at the first moment remember where she was or what had occurred. She wondered at the unnatural darkness; but when she stretched out her hand to draw her curtain, and struck it against the cold rock, and felt an aching pain in her limbs as she moved on her stony couch, recollection came back like a torrent; and only recalling her miseries, without being sufficiently awake to rouse her courage and faith to endure them, the poor child's

fortitude gave way, and she burst into a flood of bitter tears.

"Don't sob so, Phemie; you'll drive me wild," exclaimed Arthur. His sister's weeping was hushed in a moment.

"Oh, Arthur, I am afraid that I awoke you. I'm so sorry! It was very selfish in me to cry."

"I can't bear to hear you speak so," said Arthur hoarsely, "when it was my folly that brought all this misery upon you."

"You meant no harm, dear Arthur. None of us knew the danger into which we were going. Oh!" she exclaimed, in an altered tone, "what is this laid over my feet to keep me warm during the night? A jacket! Arthur—dear, kind Arthur!"

"I did not put it there," said her brother; "it must have been Asahel who did so. I do not believe that I ever did one kind action in my life; I mean one that really cost me something."

"Should we not all lead different lives," murmured Phemie, "if the Lord would only save us from this terrible place?"

Here the musical voice of Asahel joined in. "I have often wondered," said he, "what my feelings would be were an angel to tell me that I never should see the light of another sun. I thought with what fervent zeal I should perform good works."

"We can do nothing here!" exclaimed Arthur.

"Except believe and submit," suggested Asahel.

"And oh, what a comfort to know," cried Phemie, "that the great work has been done for us already. We are not left to our own poor efforts."

"But if I ever get out—" began Asahel.

"How one's heart leaps at the very word!" interrupted Arthur. "How the mere thought of light and food and fresh air seems to give one new life and spirit! My eyes ache so with this horrible darkness!"

"I do not see why we should despair of escaping," said Asahel more cheerfully. "Let us make one more resolute effort. We will divide, that we may more thoroughly examine the place; know each other's position by frequent hallooing; and the first who catches a glimpse of the daylight shall shout three times as loud as he can."

This proposition was eagerly seconded by Arthur, at whose age hope is usually buoyant, and whose energies were stimulated by the sharp pang of hunger. Phemie felt secretly frightened at the idea of being separated from her companions, and dying, perhaps, quite alone. She, however, kept her fears to herself, and only proposed prayer before they divided.

Again the three knelt down on the cold, hard

floor, and Asahel poured out his supplications in the name of the Redeemer. He then asked Phemie if she could remember by heart some portion of the Gospel; and she repeated the first verses of the Sermon on the Mount.

"These were never the words of a mere man," exclaimed Asahel, when her soft voice was silent. "The world says, 'Blessed are the rich, the proud, the admired.' God's thoughts are not as our thoughts."

"And even in this dark prison—even in this place of death," murmured Phemie, "we see that the blessing of the Lord may rest upon us."

Arthur had often heard those beautiful verses which his sister had repeated, but they had never carried before such self-condemnation into his soul. He had despised meekness; thought poorness of spirit a name for weakness; and as for hungering and thirsting after righteousness, he had neither felt a want nor a wish on the subject. He knew now only too well what it was for the mortal body to hunger. Could the longing of the soul for purity and holiness ever resemble this, or its love of knowledge the painful yearning for light which the wanderers experienced now!

They soon separated from each other, as Asahel had proposed, and Phemie was left alone to grope

her way in the darkness. She listened to the halloos, which grew fainter and more faint, and longed and prayed for the signal shout, which would have filled her heart with transport. But, alas! that welcome shout never echoed along the gloomy lodes. The searchers never saw one gleam of daylight piercing the darksome mine. A fall of earth had taken place very near the hole in the side of the hill, and had so completely blocked up the passage, that, had a lifetime been spent in searching, no gust of pure air, no glimmering ray, would have guided them to the opening. Their prison was completely sealed; and again, after their exhausting wanderings, the three met, more weary and hungry than ever; and their fortitude would have entirely failed them but for the hope which shone beyond the grave.

And thus by nature are all mankind wandering in darkness and in the shadow of death. Eagerly they enter life, hopefully they commence their search for happiness, and believe that the feeble light which they bring will suffice to guide them to that which they desire. But what would it have availed to the lost ones in the mine if the walls of their prison had been of pure gold?—it could not have satisfied their hunger—it could not have preserved them from death! And so, if we carry on the image, "*What*

shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If he have not the bread of the Word of God, the living waters of the Spirit—if the light of the gospel shine not on him—if he has his portion in a world of trial and change, and no sure hope of at length finding his way to the eternal sunshine of heaven—what shall it profit him though all earth could offer were laid at his feet?

While the three remained in their dreary prison, the sky blushed rosy at the approach of the sun; the bright orb rose upon the earth, the birds twittered to welcome the light; and the sounds of man's labour were heard again—the blow of the hammer, the stroke of the axe; the fisherman spread his sail to the wind, and the regular dip of the boatman's oar broke the ripple on the glancing waters. The earth was bathed in beautiful sunshine; the poorest, the meanest could bask in the cheerful beams, which never penetrated the living tomb in which the poor wanderers were buried!

Even Oldshaft, with its mud hovels and shingle-built sheds, looked almost gay in the light of morning. Merry voices of children were heard there; women spread out linen to bleach in the sun; one man sat mending his nets, another eating his simple meal; and the clinking clang from the blacksmith's forge told that his day of toil had begun. He was

engaged that morning in replacing a shoe which had been dropped by the horse of a traveller. The rider sauntered up and down while the smith was busy at his occupation, and entered into conversation with a group that were gathered at the door of a cottage.

It would have been impossible, on that day, to have spoken for five minutes to any inhabitant of Oldshaft without hearing something of the subject which was uppermost in the minds of all—the woful disappearance of the children, who had been drowned by the rising of the tide. All kinds of rumours were abroad, some true, some exaggerated, some entirely false. It was said that one of the bodies had been recovered, but this statement had been contradicted; one of the women knew for certain that Mr. Salomons had gone mad; "and no wonder," said she, stooping to kiss a little prattler at her feet; "it's a sore stroke to a parent to lose a child, and a Jew has feelings as well as Christians."

"I was a certain as summat was a-going to happen," said an old woman, who was standing near, shaking her head in a mysterious manner; "it ain't for nothing when the voices are heard from the dead;" and with her wrinkled finger she pointed to the earth.

"I heard 'em, too, I'm sure of it," said the first

woman who had spoken, lowering her voice to an awe-struck whisper.

"Heard what?" said the traveller, quickly.

"Sounds from the old mine, where poor Nat Burns perished," said the aged woman, speaking slowly, and measuring each word which she uttered. "When there's a death a-going to be, then—then—" (the little children crouched nearer to their mother, as the old speaker glanced fearfully round her) "there's a warning voice from below—and we all know what it bodes!"

"What sort of a sound was it?" inquired the gentleman, with interest.

"Well," said a man near, rubbing his grizzly chin, "a sort of underground rumbling, I should say."

"No—a wailing—a cry for the dead!" said the old woman, and her bony hand trembled as she spoke.

"You heard it too?" said the traveller, turning with animation towards the young mother.

"I heard summat: I can't say what it was like; I thought it was the wind shrieking, and I tried to get to sleep," replied the cottager in a hesitating tone.

"Is there any entrance into the mine of which you spoke?" asked the gentleman. "It is just

possible that what you heard were cries for help from the poor children, who may be wandering within it."

The suggestion was received with blank astonishment. Such an idea had never entered the minds of the peasants, and with open eyes and mouths they stared first on the stranger, then on each other, every one afraid to give an opinion upon a question so extraordinary.

The smith, who had finished shoeing the horse, had with some others joined the group. His sleeves were turned up, so as to expose his muscular arms, and the heat-drops stood thick on his swarthy brow: he was the first to break the silence.

"It's umpossible!" he cried, giving out the sentence with the determined force with which he might have struck the iron on his anvil; "there never was a way into the mine but by the old shaft, and that," he said, pointing to the spot, "has been choked up ever since I was a boy."

"You've a strong arm, and I daresay a strong will also," said the stranger. "How long do you think we should take in clearing out that rubbish, and getting entrance into the mine?"

The blacksmith's only answer was a whistle. The cottagers looked almost as much surprised as when the horseman had made his first suggestion.

"Not to be thought of—not to be thought of!" cried the old woman, raising her hands. "It's just tempting fate; there's a spell in the place; no one ever gets good by going near it. There's the Mr. Moorcroft, who threw away all his money on it some thirty years ago, warn't he killed by a fall from his horse; warn't poor Nat Burns blown up by the 'plosion, warn't—"

"My good friend," said the stranger, rather impatiently, "here is a question of life or death. Three of yourselves have heard unusual sounds below the earth; some poor children at the same time are missed; it is common sense and common humanity to make sure that they are not buried in the mine."

"Shall we send to Mr. Salomons?" suggested a boatman.

"No," replied the stranger, decidedly; "I would not waken in the mind of a bereaved parent a hope so likely to end in disappointment. There are enough of us here to do the work. What!" he continued, glancing around him, "can Englishmen hang back—or must your labour be purchased by gold?" and he hastily drew out his purse.

"No, no," cried the smith; "we want no money, we only want—"

"An example," said the gentleman, pulling off

his coat; "who'll lend me a mattock? I'll begin."

In a few minutes all the men were at work, the stranger the foremost of them all. The smith, indeed, muttered that they were throwing away labour, making a hole just to fill it up again; the old woman muttered dismal auguries and forebodings—it was well that the men were too busy to hear them. There was soon quite a mound of the rubbish and sand which they had dug out of the shaft, and at every symptom of relaxed exertions on the part of the diggers the indefatigable stranger roused them to fresh efforts by words and example.

"I'll tell ye what," said the smith, wiping his hot brow, "I'm ready enough to dig, I'm not a-grudging my work; but," he added, resuming his spade, and striking it down with tremendous force into the ground, "no power shall make me go into the mine;" and he set his heel on his tool with an air of dogged resolution.

"'Tis full of bad air; 'twould poison a toad," said the boatman; "let who will go in, I'll not be one!"

"Mind my word," cried the old woman's shrill voice; "and if you don't heed it, ye will rue it: whoever goes into that mine will be blown up like Nat Burns. I'd as lief walk right into a furnace."

The stranger was surprised to find the amount of ignorance and superstitious fear prevailing amongst the people of Oldshaft. Hardy fellows, who would have charged up to a cannon's mouth, and met any ordinary danger without flinching, resisted both arguments and persuasions when they ran counter to the prejudices and superstitions which had been fostered amongst them from their childhood. The men worked for hours, and worked hard, until a way was broken into the mine, and the long-deserted lode was open for the entrance of any one bold enough to explore it. But the place was considered unlucky—haunted; it was firmly believed that to enter it was to die. When the stranger, standing with a torch in his hand, called on his brave comrades to assist him in pursuing his underground search, every one silently hung back; no one was willing to respond to his call.

"Is there no one who will follow me?" he exclaimed. There was a pause, and then a murmuring amongst the men, in which the words "fire-damp," "choke-damp," "fool's-errand," "never return again," might be distinguished. "Are you fathers?" he continued, with kindling eyes; "if it were your children who were lost instead of those of an unhappy Jew, would you forego the slightest chance of saving them; would you shrink from the

greatest danger? Think that your own little ones may be wandering in the darkness; how readily would you venture all for their sakes!" Another pause, but no voice replied. "What!—you are afraid!—you will not follow!" cried the stranger; "will none go with me?—enough—I go alone!"

CHAPTER XVI.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

THE three wanderers were seated close together; the terrors of that fearful time had drawn them nearer to each other. Arthur was the saddest and most silent of the three. Physical suffering and mental distress were alike new to the youth, and had found him altogether unprepared: but he would have been ashamed to have shown less fortitude than Asahel, whose character he had regarded as soft; and while Phemie could speak quietly and calmly, her brother would have blushed to have shed a tear. Phemie's lips were parched, and her voice very faint, and her small hands trembled as she clasped them together; but a holy firmness was given to the child; and when she repeated a verse from a favourite hymn, her heart bore witness to the truth of the words,—

"'Tis Religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
'Tis Religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die!"

"Yes, yours—ours is a beautiful religion," said Asahel; "and oh, so different from what I had deemed it. Religion seemed to me to belong only to the conscience, and now I feel that it is the life of the heart. God is so terrible when we look at him only as a Judge—so unspeakably glorious when we behold him as a Saviour."

"But you always had part of the Scriptures," said Phemie; "and there is so much about God's love in the Old Testament as well as in the New."

"I am afraid," replied Asahel, "that I rather read the Scriptures for the beauty of the poetry and the interest of the stories than really to gain knowledge on religious subjects. But what I have heard since I entered this gloomy place has thrown a new light upon all which I have read. In every part of the Old Testament I find something to remind me of the Lord: Judah offering to suffer in the place of Benjamin; David hazarding his life for his sheep, or, after once being rejected by his people, returning to take possession of his throne, all his enemies subdued before him—I see in them emblems of the

Saviour. And to think that I shall one day behold him! Soon, perhaps very soon, I shall stand in his presence—no, rather shall worship at his feet!"

"Asahel!" exclaimed Arthur, "you seem to think little of the wretched state in which we all are now."

"I do not forget it, I cannot," replied Asahel, a feeling of faintness stealing over his frame. "I know that we are in the depths, the deep depths. But," he added, with more animation, "we may resemble the Israelites passing through the Red Sea —God will lead us through the waters of trouble; we are bound to the promised land, and the pillar of light shines before us."

Phemie convulsively grasped his arm. "Look! look! do you see nothing?" she exclaimed, trembling violently in every limb.

Both the boys looked with an intense eagerness on a reflected gleam which appeared on the wall not far from where they sat, at a spot opposite one of the long dark passages which they had explored in vain.

"It moves!—it grows brighter!" exclaimed Asahel.

Arthur sprang to his feet with a loud, wild shout, which rang through the farthest recesses of the mine, and even reached the ears of the cottagers of Old-

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"WE ARE SAVED!"

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shaft. It was answered by a glad but distant cheer. Scarcely less rapturous than the feelings of the rescued wanderers were those of the stranger when startled by the shout which apprised him of the success of his almost hopeless search. The children rushed forward, guided by the light, which poured a stream of brightness through the lode. Arthur was the foremost of them all; and the tears, thanks, blessings, and agitated greetings which followed when they grasped the hand of their preserver, and felt themselves rescued from their living tomb, the reader may better conceive than I attempt to describe.

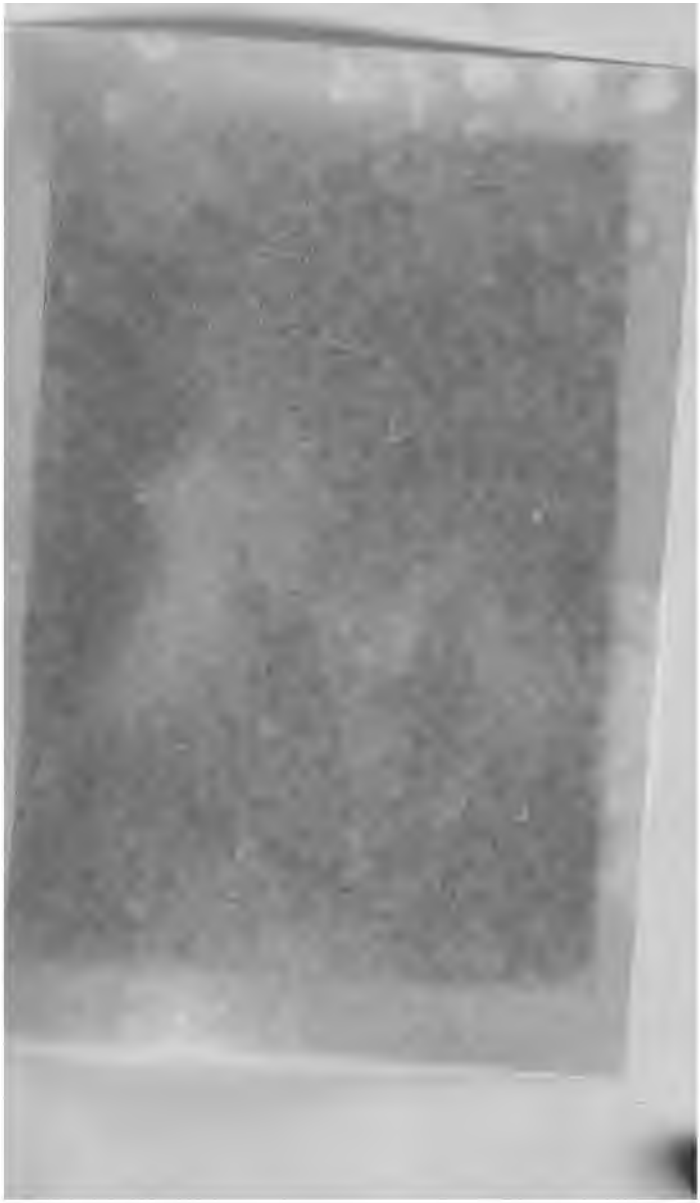
The stranger had stuck his torch in a cleft in the wall; the light painfully dazzled eyes so long accustomed to the profoundest darkness; and yet, oh, how welcome was that light!

"Phemie, we are saved!" exclaimed Arthur.

"God had mercy on us, Arthur," sobbed his sister.

"Arthur! Phemie!" exclaimed the stranger, in a loud, agitated voice, grasping a hand of each, and looking at them with an expression of the most intense emotion. "Children, children, who is your father?"

"Our father's name was Moorcroft; he is dead—"



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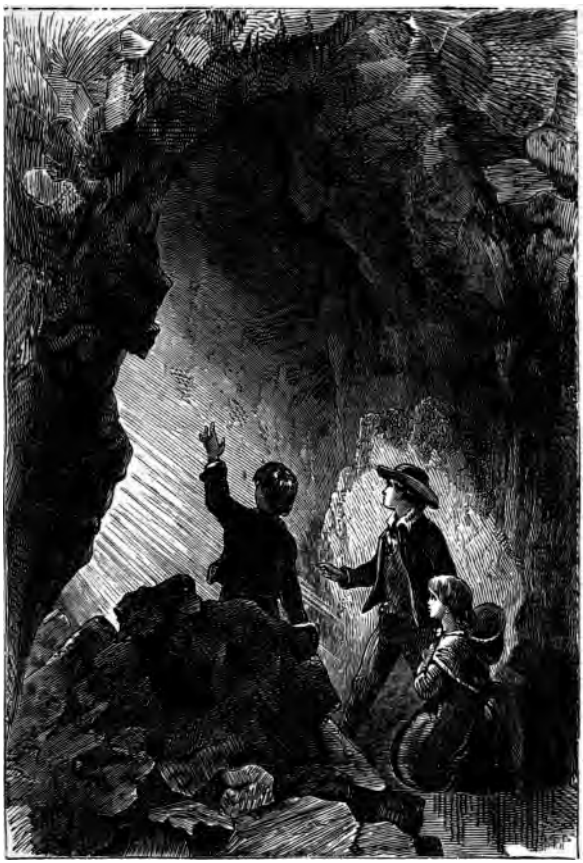

"WE ARE SAVED!"

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"He lives!—he lives!" exclaimed the stranger, clasping them both to his heart. "He lives to praise and bless God who has restored to him his children. Arthur! Phemie! you are in the arms of your father!"

CHAPTER XVII.

RESTORATION.

IT was indeed the brother of Horace, his long-lost, deeply-mourned brother, who, led by the highest motives, had sacrificed his own eager impatience to arrive quickly at his home; and in his search for the children of a supposed stranger, had become the earthly means of rescuing his own!

It will be necessary briefly to describe to the reader the circumstances attending Mr. Moorcroft's preservation, and to show why, for so many months, his family had had reason to believe him to be dead.

The fall from the Sicilian cliff, from which he had been hurled by a brother's arm, had stunned but not killed Mr. Moorcroft. The waters which received him below broke the shock of his descent, and were probably the means of saving his life.

Notwithstanding the despairing haste with which Horace had flung himself down the nearest path, and, regardless of difficulty or danger, made his way by night down a cliff which the boldest would scarcely have ventured to descend by day, his brother, stunned and senseless in the water, must infallibly have perished by drowning had not other means of rescue been near.

A party of men, proscribed and hunted down by the Sicilian government for political offences, had taken refuge in a cave close to the spot where Arthur fell. Urged by feelings of humanity, they had drawn the senseless body from the waves, and carried it into their place of concealment. Prudence and a regard to their own safety had made the fugitives preserve profound silence when the wretched Horace passed and repassed the cave while pursuing his vain search for his brother. They neither knew the anguish of his soul nor the generosity of his character, or they would have thrown themselves on his honour, and so saved him from many months of grief almost beyond endurance.

It was nearly a week before the injured Moorcroft recovered his consciousness of what was passing around him; and during that period the steamer which had borne him to the ill-fated island had started on its way to England, with his broken-

hearted brother on board. Arthur awoke from his death-like trance to find himself in the hands of the police! The hiding-place of the fugitives had been discovered—they had been seized as enemies of the government; and the fact of his being found in their cave made the Englishman be arrested as their accomplice!

In vain the poor, weak sufferer pleaded his utter ignorance of all that had occurred since his fall, his innocence of any conspiracy or design to interfere with Italian politics—in vain he claimed the rights of a British subject, and demanded permission to communicate with his own consul. He found neither mercy nor justice. The jealousy of the Sicilian government is well known; its severity towards political offenders, and the secrecy with which it conducts its operations against unhappy offenders. Arthur Moorcroft spent months in wearisome captivity, cut off from all communication with his friends, and tortured by the thought of what Horace must endure whilst believing him killed by the fall.

At length the miserable situation of the English gentleman became known to some of his countrymen at Palermo. Every effort was made to procure his release; and as no proofs of guilt had ever been discovered, those efforts were happily success-

ful. Arthur Moorcroft made use of the first hour of his liberty to write to his brother; but not being certain of his place of residence, he addressed his letter to an agent in London. This had occasioned a little delay in its reaching the place of its destination; and with such rapidity had Moorcroft travelled, in his impatience to reach his home, that he had actually outstripped his letter, having learned from a friend whom he met at Southampton that his family had settled in Cornwall. Moorcroft was on the last stage of his journey, when the accident of his horse having cast off its shoe necessitated his stopping at Oldshaft. He there heard of the supposed death of three children; and the reader is acquainted with the rest.

Great was the amazement of the good peasants at Oldshaft when Mr. Moorcroft, who had taken the precaution of marking his way as he explored the mine, emerged from its dark recesses into the daylight, with his three pale, haggard, but happy charges! The old woman herself forgot all her predictions of evil in her haste to run for food for the half-starved wanderers; and all were loud in the praises of him whom, but an hour before, they had regarded as an obstinate, fool-hardy enthusiast.

Asahel was anxious to return to his grandfather as speedily as possible. He scarcely satisfied the

cravings of hunger, but taking a piece of bread in his hand, said that he would eat it as he walked. His manner was restless and excited, and less joyous than that of his companions. There was something weighing on the heart of the youth, and his nerves were shaken by long fasting and the late painful strain upon his mind.

"I shall need other food," he said in a low voice; the words were addressed to Arthur, but his eyes instinctively sought those of Phemie.

She was clinging with delight to the arm of her newly-recovered parent. But she quitted it in a moment; she had read Asahel's look; without a word she pressed her Bible into his hand.

The twenty-four hours which they had passed together, under circumstances so awful, had made the two understand each other better than years of casual intercourse could have done. They had faced death side by side; they had exchanged thoughts on the most solemn of subjects, when they believed themselves standing on the brink of the grave. If Asahel had found in Arthur a pleasant companion, in Phemie he had discovered a friend and a sister.

"Pray for me, Phemie," he whispered, as he placed the precious gift in his bosom; "I may have much to suffer, and I feel myself so helpless and weak."

He read a silent promise in Phemie's moistened

eyes, and refusing the proffered escort of Mr. Moorcroft, darted off in the direction of his home.

Loud were the rejoicings at Eshcol Hall on the sudden return of the lost heir! Mr. Salomons, in the excitement of his joy, welcomed, questioned, embraced, and chid his grandson by turns, till at length the wearied looks and fevered pulse of the poor boy procured him a dismissal to his own room. Asahel, as soon as he was alone, sank on his knees, and poured out a fervent thanksgiving for the preservation of his life, and as fervent a prayer that that life might from thenceforth be devoted to the service of his Lord. Asahel felt that a great change had passed on his mind since last he had knelt in that room. He must no longer dwell in an ideal world of his own; his existence was no more to be as a poetical dream; he had embraced a faith, and he must hold it fast; he had given himself to a Saviour, and he must confess him at whatever cost. Asahel was not accustomed to "endure hardness;" his gentle, sensitive spirit recoiled from a harsh word or look, and, in his enfeebled state, he dreaded beyond expression an explanation with his grandfather, the Jew. Eagerly he sought in the Scriptures for encouragement and guidance; and as with him prayer accompanied perusal, he was not left to search in vain. With delight he read the parts of the gospel

which he had never seen before. All was to him so vivid and new! The imagination of Asahel pictured to him every scene as though it were actually passing before him. He put himself into the place of those of whom he read, and could almost believe the words of the Lord especially addressed to himself. The humble prayer of the miserable leper, the feelings of the son of the widow of Nain when he opened his eyes to the light, the joy of the weeping penitent when she heard that her sins were forgiven,—all were realized by the young Jew, with a distinctness known to few of those favoured ones to whom the beautiful histories in the gospel have been familiar from childhood.

Asahel found courage to tell Mr. Salomons the next morning, with downcast eyes and a glowing cheek, that he had learned to love the faith of the Christians, and to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

Asahel's confession was received in a very different way from that which he had expected. Mr. Salomons looked certainly surprised, but neither angry nor distressed at the communication. He treated Asahel's new belief as a childish fancy,—a light spark which would soon die out of itself, if not fanned by opposition. He smiled at his grandson's earnestness. To the worldly man everything unconnected with

gain and gold appeared like an airy, unsubstantial bubble. He thought that Asahel's wanderings had unsettled his ideas, that there was feverish excitement in his mind, and contented himself at first with a little worldly advice, and a few sneers at those whom he called Gentiles. But for the deep obligation under which Mr. Salomons lay to the father of Arthur and Phemie, he would, doubtless, have forbidden his grandson to have further intercourse with the family at the Hatch; but Mr. Moorcroft was the preserver of Asahel, and the old Jew was not ungrateful. He therefore left matters for a time, as he said, to right themselves, and closed his eyes to the consequences.

But Asahel was not to escape altogether from the burden of the cross,—the painful trials which await a convert. When the tidings of his change was bruited abroad amongst the members of the Jewish community, a fierce spirit of persecution was aroused, and though Mr. Salomons took little part in them, many and strong efforts were made to shake the young Christian's constancy. How precious then to the gentle Asahel were the warm sympathy of Arthur and Phemie, and the calm, wise counsels of their father! how precious, above all, the power of pouring out his cares and trials at the throne of grace!

The firmness shown by one of so tender and loving

a nature—the strength of principle displayed by the once dreamy, ease-loving youth, were not without their effect on Mr. Salomons. If he found that the seed of the gospel had taken deep root in his grandson's heart, that the spark of religion in Asahel's breast had become an unextinguishable flame, he found also that the tree bore the fruit of filial obedience and love—that the flame, from whatever source lighted, shed a brightness upon his home. All opposition from the old Jew died away. When those of his creed angrily expostulated with him on Asahel's openly becoming a Christian, Mr. Salomons would philosophically reply, that as long as the youth continued to give him satisfaction by his conduct, he was free to believe what he chose, and to be called by what name he liked best.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

BUT I have forestalled at the close of the preceding chapter that which was the gradual work of years. I will now go back to the eventful day on which Asahel and his companions were released from their imprisonment in the mine.

The warm glow of the afternoon sun gave brightness even to the dull walls and dim windows of Moorcroft Hatch. Not a cloud darkened the azure of the sky, only a few white flakes dotted the blue expanse. The wind had sunk to the gentlest breeze, too light to ruffle the waves, or to disturb the clear, lake-like mirror which reflected the hue of heaven. It was a bright and lovely day, and everything seemed to rejoice in the sunlight, save the one gloomy and desolate being who paced the shingle before Moorcroft Hatch.

For hours Horace had walked up and down, restless as a lion in a cage, unconscious either of weariness or of the lapse of time. He was enduring an inward struggle—a struggle to feel resigned—a struggle to recognize God's wisdom and love, even in his darkest dispensations. And Horace was painfully questioning his own heart in regard to the charges whom he had lost. He was asking himself how far he had performed his duty to the orphans of his beloved brother. He had indeed made sacrifices, great sacrifices for their interest, but had he ever made their happiness his object? Had he not cast a shadow over their short lives—been cold, and hard, and repulsive—suffered the weight on his own spirits to press down theirs, and contented himself with performing bare duties, while neglecting all the gentler offices of affection? It would be well if all thus examined their own conduct towards those amongst whom Providence has placed them, before death makes future reparation impossible, and leaves the survivor nothing but vain regret.

Suddenly Horace heard his own name pronounced, and started as though the voice had been from the dead! The throbbing of his heart was agony, and he turned to see the speaker with an uncontrollable emotion which turned his cheek of an ashen hue. Three forms were hurrying towards him. His lost

nephew and niece pressed eagerly forward, joy in their sparkling eyes, good tidings on their lips; but Horace neither saw nor heard them—he was conscious of the presence but of *one:* with a bound he sprang forward to meet him, clasped him to his breast, as though to assure himself that it was indeed no vision, no phantom that he saw; and then all the strong man's fortitude gave way, joy effected that which grief had not done, and, with all the weakness of a child, Horace fell on the neck of his brother and burst into tears!

It was three days after this happy reunion of the long-divided family of Moorcroft, that they all went on a sailing excursion, accompanied by Asahel da Costa. Mr. Moorcroft guided the little vessel; Horace sat with folded arms in the bow, a calm peaceful expression on his manly features, to which they for long had been a stranger, but his eye constantly rested on his brother, as though to assure his own heart that he really beheld him again.

Arthur and Asahel had been working hard at the oars, but the latter had soon become wearied with the exertion, and the sail being now spread to the breeze, the young rowers had shipped their oars, and enjoyed the smooth motion without further effort of

their own. Phemie, the picture of happiness, sat at her father's feet, and ever and anon expressed her enjoyment by a low, sweet song.

"Arthur," said she, turning round to her brother with a playful smile, "did you ever think that we could be so happy, so rich? I do not believe that we shall care to go again to seek for treasures in the mine!" and she rested her arms on her father's knee, and laid down her head upon them, and as she felt the fond pressure of his caressing hand, thought herself rich indeed!

"And yet, Phemie, I was not wrong," cried her brother. "I expected to find a treasure, and I found it—a far better treasure than I looked for! It was in that dark gloomy place, when we were almost in despair with hunger and misery, cold and fear, that we came upon something better than all the mines of Peru could hold, for the first light that shone on our dazzled eyes showed us our long-lost father!"

A bright, heavenly expression passed over the countenance of Asahel, the fatherless and motherless boy. Could we put his silent thought into words, it might appear somewhat as follows:—

"And I too have found a treasure, above all money and above all price! When human comforts were gone, when all earthly hope was crushed, and

the darkness of death seemed around me, then for me too a light arose! I beheld a Guide through all the dangerous mazes of life, a Preserver from the fate that I feared, and now can my soul rest in peace and joy on the love of my Father in heaven!"